

"The first step, my son, which one makes in the world, is the one on which depends the rest of our days."

-Voltaire

Chapter 1: A New Beginning

Harry got off the boat that had just brought him, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, and Neville Longbottom across the lake. He said good-bye to Hagrid and continued to follow the rest of the first years to the front of Hogwarts.

They walked through the front doors of Hogwarts into the Entrance Hall. Harry only knew it was the Entrance Hall because, beside him, Hermione had mentioned it as such. He could hear her talking, but it seemed to be far away because Harry was so amazed, and this was just the Entrance Hall.

The first years stopped in front of another pair of huge doors with a professor standing in front of them.

"That's Professor McGonagall," said Hermione.

"How do you know this?" said Ron, waiting for an answer that he would never receive.

A blond boy that he remembered from Diagon Alley had pushed Ron from behind with his shoulder and turned toward Harry.

"Harry Potter, isn't it?" said the boy. He didn't let Harry answer. Harry saw that the boy looked conniving. "I'm Malfoy. Draco Malfoy." Malfoy looked at Ron with disgust, then seemed to dare a glance at Hermione, but quickly turned away.

"You don't want to be hanging around with the wrong wizards, Harry. I know that you want be with the best, right? I can help you there." He put out his hand, so that Harry could shake it.

Harry was very hesitant to shake Malfoy's hand. He looked at Ron and Hermione, and then looked back at Malfoy and shook his hand.

After doing so, Malfoy pulled him by the hand leading him away from Ron and Hermione.

Harry turned back to look back at them, and saw that they both had a look of sadness upon their faces. Harry realized that he was sad, too. Why? Why did he for some reason know that he would have been great friends with those two he had just left behind.

Malfoy stopped walking and let go of Harry's hand. "You wouldn't have wanted to be friends with *those* two," Malfoy said, jerking his head toward the way they had just come.

"Er...yeah. Yeah your right," said Harry, not completely convinced he had done the right thing. Why did he feel like he had just left his two best friends behind? But he could still be friends with Ron and Hermione, right? All these questions were racing through his head when Professor McGonagall began to speak.

"First years, first years! Quiet! As some of you know the start-of-term banquet is about to begin, but before it can, you all must be sorted. You will all walk in and gather around the stool that will be placed in front of the Headmaster Dumbledore. I will call each of your names, you will sit on the stool and I will place the Sorting Hat upon your head, and you will be sorted into one of the four Houses. As you most likely know the four Houses are Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin," said Professor McGonagall. She said the last house with a bit of disgust though no one seemed to notice, but Harry since they were all talking about the Houses now.

"Slytherin," Malfoy whispered beside him. *Ron had mentioned one of these houses. Which one was it? Oh, yeah it was Gryffindor.*

"Come on, then," said Professor McGonagall.

The huge double doors behind Professor McGonagall began to open into the Great Hall. All the first years started to follow her again, looking around.

Harry was amazed by the Great Hall with its thousands of floating candles. He clearly saw that there were five tables. Four were spaced out next to each other, with the older students sitting at them

and the last, the High Table, was at the end of the hall, the sits filled in by the professors. At the center, he saw the man whom he recognized from the Chocolate Frog card as the Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. Even if he hadn't seen Dumbledore from the card, he would have been able to tell it was the Headmaster because of his delicate, but supreme power.

Harry noticed that other students were looking up at the ceiling, so he decided to look up, as well. He saw the night sky filled with stars instead of a regular high ceiling. Harry was in shock. He'd never seen anything like it.

The line stopped moving and he almost banged into Crabbe or Goyle, he couldn't remember which was which. He looked forward and saw that upon the stool that was placed before Dumbledore, was an old hat. *That was how we were going to be sorted?* Harry didn't understand. It wouldn't be until the students began to be sorted would Harry understand.

The hat began to sing about the four Houses of Hogwarts that he had just so recently learned about: Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Harry didn't catch all of what the Sorting Hat was saying because he was so nervous.

What House would I be put into? I didn't know about the Houses until now. Which one do I belong to?

"...Gryffindor, a place where the brave last the longest and the fearless are never lost..." said the Sorting Hat.

Gryffindor seems like a good House. Ron said he wanted to be in this House. But am I brave or fearless? I don't know.

"...Possibly Slytherin, where the malicious sort find it to be their humble abode..." said the hat. Harry turned to look at Malfoy who looked bored. He tried to look for Ron or Hermione, but he couldn't find them. Harry turned back to look at the Sorting Hat. " ...And are devious in every way possible..." and the Sorting Hat continued on.

Maybe Slytherin. It didn't sound too bad. I head Malfoy say that he wanted to be in Slytherin. Is that the one I belong in?

Harry had so many questions running through his head about the Houses, but he was taken away from his thoughts by the applause of the school because the Sorting Hat had finished singing.

Professor McGonagall stepped forward and took out a piece of parchment, and began calling out names one by one. The sorting seemed like a blur to Harry. He can vaguely remember hearing Hermione, Malfoy, and Ron's names being called.

A lot of names were called before Harry heard Professor McGonagall say, "Harry Potter."

Slowly, Harry stepped forward through the ones that had yet to be sorted. Once he reached the stool, he turned to face the students and sat on the stool. He could feel Professor McGonagall place the Sorting Hat on his head.

"Hmm...you're the most difficult choice to make yet. You have a lot of courage, though you might not know it yet. You are very loyal, as well. You might do well in Gryffindor. But Slytherin is another thing to consider, yes. You have a desire to be great and powerful. You will go far in...**SLYTHERIN!**" yelled the Sorting Hat. He was glad that the rest of the school couldn't hear the beginning of what the Sorting Hat said.

No one applauded like they did for all the other first years. *Did I do something wrong?* Professor McGonagall took off the Sorting Hat and Harry slid off the stool, and started to walk toward the Slytherin table. He sat down next to Malfoy facing the rest of the tables. He looked up and was glad to see that Professor McGonagall had already called another name. He saw in the corner of his eye that Dumbledore was looking at him intently. They met eyes, but Harry couldn't figure out what Dumbledore was thinking, but Harry knew it wasn't good. He turned away to see a girl sit at the Hufflepuff table.

A/N: It's my first story, so tell me what you like and what you don't like, it would really help! thanx. and I've already written the next couple chapters, so don't worry about waiting. PLEASE REVIEW!

“A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies.” -Wilde,
Picture of Dorian Gray

Chapter 2: Rules and Rooms

There was a warm and inviting speech from Dumbledore right after the feast. In which he also added the rules about how no student is allowed to be in the Forbidden Forest and that the door on the third floor corridor on the right hand side is out-of-bounds. Harry got up from the table to walked with the other Slytherins toward the Slytherin Common Room.

Harry was still unsure about the sorting and his choosing of friends, but he knew that there was nothing he could do about it now. He was a Slytherin and there was nothing he could do anymore. He was now friends with Draco Malfoy, if you could call Malfoy a friend. He's only known him for a couple hours.

Harry wasn't in that good of a mood and the fact that students, whether they were a first year or a fifth year, were looking at him and his scar. Every time he looked up, he caught someone else's eyes moving up toward his scar in awe. He could hear whispers all around him. “I can't believe Harry Potter became a Slytherin!” said a girl loudly not even caring that he was standing right there. She walked by and Harry noticed that she looked like a fourth year.

From the Great Hall, an older girl from Slytherin walked the first years around a couple corridors and down two flights of stairs. They seemed to now be in the dungeons of Hogwarts. They walked until they came to a regular spot of stonewall. *What are we doing here? Where's the Common Room and the Dormitories?* The older student said, “Awakening” and part of the stone wall magically formed into a stone door, that slid away to reveal the Slytherin Common Room. Harry found out that to get into the Common Room later, he would have to remember that password.

After all the first years were inside the a Common Room, a professor he recognized from the High Table came to “welcome” them. Harry couldn't quite see the professor because of all the other first years in front of him.

Harry looked around before the professor spoke. Like outside, the room had stonewalls and set around the room were various dark green chairs and couches and a couple tables. On one wall there was a fireplace with a large fire.

Harry heard the professor clear his throat, so he turned back from looking at the room.

“New Slytherin’s, I’d like to welcome you to Hogwarts. I am the Head of Slytherin House. I am Professor Severus Snape. But... since you are all in my House, you may call me Snape. This room you are all standing in is the Common Room and if you follow those stairs downward you will come to find your dormitories. Now lets get straight to the point,” said Snape, waiting for some of the other Slytherin’s to calm down.

“Look at the people around you. These are your allies, your classmates, and most of all, your friends. Do not cross one another, for you may never know who you will need I the future. Here are the rules: One. I am warning you now; I am not someone to cross. I will not take crap from any of you. Two. There is to be no fighting among you outside these Slytherin walls. I will not have one of you, making the rest of us look bad. Do what you will here. And three. No one is to go into the Forbidden Forest and you must not be out past the Slytherin walls after dark. And another thing, no one, no one is allowed to go on the third floor corridor on the right hand side. Yes, Professor Dumbledore told you this, but I am saying it again. Heed these words,” said Snape, as he waited for a dramatic pause, which definitely worked. “That is what you need to know. The secrets within these castle walls will become apparent to you overtime. For there is much each of you have yet to learn. For now, go to your dormitories and do what you will.”

The other students in front of Harry began walking toward the stairs that lead downward toward the dormitories.

Harry turned and saw Snape looking at him. Now, after getting closer to Snape, he could see the professor a lot better than from behind all his other classmates. Snape was very pale with long, oily black hair and a large nose. It seemed that the teacher had a very noticeable

dislike for Harry. Harry could almost see anger in Snape's eyes. *Why is Snape looking at me like I did something seriously wrong? I haven't crossed him. Have I?* Harry had never met Snape in his entire life, before today. That Harry was sure of. He definitely would have remembered seeing someone like him.

Harry looked away, but he could still feel Snape's eyes on him. He began walking down the stone steps. The only thing lighting their way were torches every two feet. The further he went down, the colder it got. But the cold didn't seem to be bothering anyone else. It was as if they didn't even notice it. Harry tugged at his cloak to wrap it around him more.

"Cold, Potter?" someone asked from behind. Harry didn't even check who it was. He didn't recognize the voice anyway.

"Yeah, a bit," Harry replied back. *Why didn't anyone else notice that it was getting colder. I hope that there are fireplaces in the dormitories. Or else I'll freeze to death before classes even start.*

Once at the bottom of the stairs, the hall split into two corridors. The older girl student that had led them to the Common Room told them that boys were to the left and girls to the right. He saw her lead the girls down the other corridor. Harry turned to follow the rest of the boys. Again he saw torches lighting their way. At first there were no doors, only engravings in the walls on either side of them. They were of two huge snakes entwined in each other. On the stone ground, there was now a deep red carpet leading to the end of the hall, which was a dead end. On the wall at the end there was one huge snake in a large spiral with its tongue out.

"Oh! Cool! I like the snakes," said a boy who was standing in front of him.

Now Harry and the other Slytherins could see four back doors on either side of the hall. They were all numbered in Roman Numerals. One of the older students came out of the closest door to the left, which had a the letter "v" on it standing for "5." He told us that the door furthest down on the right, which had an "i" on it, was for the first years.

Once Harry got in the room he saw that, thankfully, there was a fireplace. He saw that the walls were again stone and that against the walls were four-post beds. Next to each bed was a small table with a green lamp on it. There were also lamps on the walls, instead of torches. Harry saw Malfoy walk towards the bed on the other side of the wall in the corner of the room. He noticed that his trunk was in front of the bed that was across from Malfoy's, which was in the other corner. Crabbe and Goyle went to the beds next to Malfoy. Harry went and sat up on his bed. He saw the other Slytherins taking out things that meant a lot to them and setting them on the table beside the bed. Like pictures of their family. Harry was thinking of what was in his trunk that meant a lot to him. *Nothing. I don't have anything that means a lot to me. Nothing the Dursley's ever gave me was special because they didn't give a shit about me.*

"Hey, Harry," said Malfoy, from the door. "Want to check out the rest of this place?"

A/N: I know this one isn't that exciting, but it gets better! You'll just have to keep reading...

“He that seeks trouble always finds it.”

-English Proverb

Chapter 3: A Secret Room, A Bit of Trouble, and Too Much Thought

“Hey, Harry. Wanna check out the rest of this place?” said who Malfoy looked a little too eager to be just roaming around the castle.

“Yeah, sure,” said Harry, slowly. He got up from the bed and walked over to Malfoy. They closed the door behind them. The rest of the Slytherins didn’t even realize they had left, for they were putting up posters on the walls around their beds and rummaging through their trunks.

“Do you know where we’re going to go, Malfoy?” said Harry, curiously.

“Thought we’d just have a look around. And you don’t have to call me Malfoy. Call me Draco.”

“Okay. Just wondering,” said Harry. “Earlier I heard you say ‘Slytherin.’ Did you know that you were going to be put in Slytherin?”

“No one can be completely sure which House they are going to be put in, but my father and mother and most of my family have been in Slytherin,” said Draco.

They were now walking back up the stairs into the Common Room. Draco peeked his head into the Common Room to make sure that no one else was there. “No ones there. It’s all clear,” said Draco. He walked into the Common Room and Harry followed. Draco made his way toward the stone door that leads to the halls of Hogwarts. “Oh. How do we get out of here? Do we need another password? Or did Snape put a spell on the door to lock us in?” said Draco, clearly upset.

“I don’t know. I don’t remember Snape or that older girl mentioning that we needed a password to get out. But I don’t think Snape’s allowed to lock us in,” said Harry. Draco put his hand on door as if he was about to push the massive stone door by himself. But apparently just putting your hand on the door made the door slide open.

“Wicked,” said Draco. They both stepped out into the hall. Harry heard the stone slid back shut.

“My father told me that there is a room somewhere on the fourth floor that only him and a couple of his friends knew about. I thought you and me could check it out,” said Draco.

“Alright. Do you know where on the fourth floor? Hogwarts is, clearly, a massive castle,” said Harry, wondering.

“Calm down, Harry. I know where to go. Just follow me. And try to be quiet,” said Draco.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, Draco. Clearly, he has no idea that I’ve had to sneak around the Dursley house many times. Well, of course he would have no idea.

They walked quickly, but quietly across a couple corridors. Around the corner they could see the stairs. Harry looked around the corner and saw no professors. They walked up the stairs until they got to the fourth floor. They kept walking. Draco stopped at a tall statue of a woman. She was hiding part of her face with a long cloth that covered the rest of her body.

“My father told me that this is a statue of a Roman goddess named Angerona. She’s the goddess of secrecy,” said Draco.

He stepped toward the statue. “My secrets are yours past this door.” Harry saw Draco bow to the statue. The statue of Angerona uncovered the part of her face that had been covered and stepped a bit to the right to reveal a wooden door.

“Cor!” said Harry, in surprise. “That was amazing.” Everything here at Hogwarts has been amazing to Harry, who before a couple days ago, had to live with Muggles. There’s nothing amazing about living with Muggles.

“That’s not the only thing that’s amazing. Come on. I’ll show you,” said Draco. He walked toward the door, turned the handle, and crept into the room.

Draco walked in and Harry couldn't see him from the hall because it was so dark inside. "Come on, Harry!" called Draco from inside.

"Shhhh," said Harry as he ran into the room. "Draco, could you be any louder?" Harry closed the door behind him. He turned around to a small room with dark blue walls with candles floating all around. It was like in the Great Hall, but smaller. He saw that the ceiling was gold. Small couches were in random places all about the room in different colors. There was also one large circular table in one corner of the room with incense on it.

"Blimey!" said Harry in awe. "How did you know that this place was gonna be so amazing if you've never been to Hogwarts before?" Harry saw that Draco was at the table lighting incense. He turned around and folded his arms.

"My father described it to me. He told me that I had to see this place. He was right, of course," said Draco.

"So, what is so special about this room?" asked Harry, sitting on a red couch.

"Whenever someone tells a secret in this room, out loud to someone else or by themselves, another candle appears. The candle has the person that told the secrets name on it. So, if I were to tell you a secret of mine, another candle would appear above us with my name on it," said Draco, who was now looking up at the candles. "Yeah. Well, my father used to come in here with his friends and talk about things they couldn't talk about in the Common Room. We can always come back here. Let's keep looking around the castle," said Draco, heading for the door.

Harry got up from the red couch. "Are we going to anymore secret rooms?" Harry asked jokingly, after slipping out of the room into the corridor.

"Ha...no. No more rooms," said Draco.

They began walking away, and Harry turned around to look back at the statue of Angerona. She was back to covering her face and the wooden door. He turned back. Draco and him walked back down the

sets of stairs to the main floor with the Great Hall, thinking that they were going to go to continue walking to the Dungeons and then on to the dormitories. But Draco didn't turn the corner that led to the Dungeons.

"Where are we going?" asked Harry.

"Where ever we want," Draco said, checking the hall then crossing it. Harry wasn't sure he wanted to follow, but if he went back to the dormitories, he'd just be laying on his bed watching others take out memorable items given to them by their parents. *I don't want to be bored back at the dormitory. Oh, fine.* Harry looked at the hall and followed Draco. "Took you long enough," said Draco, his back to him looking behind the next corner.

They were both looking around the corner, when they heard footsteps from behind them. Harry and Draco turned their heads at the same time to see who it was.

"First day you're here, and you're already breaking the rules," said Snape, coldly. "I'll have to keep my eyes on you two. Especially you, Potter."

"Me? Why me? We're both out here!" said Harry.

"Quiet! Since this is only the first day, I will let you off for now. But if I catch you again, it's detention," said Snape, he was only looking at Harry. "Got it, Potter? Now go to the dormitories or I'll take away points."

Harry and Draco were walking fast to get away from Snape. Harry turned to see if Snape was looking at him again, but he had already disappeared. Once they were inside the Common Room, Harry asked Draco, "Why does Snape dislike me?"

"He doesn't. He's just like that," said Draco.

"Did you not just see that? He was yelling at me only. It was as if you weren't even there. He barely even mentioned you," said Harry, distressed.

“Well, Snape knows my father. I wouldn’t think to hard on it,” said Draco. He began to yawn. “I’m gonna go to sleep. See you.” Harry watched him walk down the stairs until he had disappeared.

Why did Snape dislike me so much? Have I done anything in this past few hours of being here that were so bad? Was it because I was put into Slytherin? Because no one applauded for me like they did for the other first years. I wonder why that was? I want to know what Professor Dumbledore was thinking. It didn’t look like something good.

Harry sat down on one of the green couches next to the fire. He was a bit upset. He thought that coming to Hogwarts would be the best thing for him. He was away from the Dursley’s and that’s how he liked it, but things weren’t going so great here either. *And what kind of things did Draco’s father and his friends talk about that they couldn’t talk about here in the Common Room. And how does Draco’s father know Snape? I’ll have to take to Hagrid. I’ll...* Harry thought no more on the subject of Draco’s father and secret rooms because he fell asleep on the couch by the fire.

A/N: Hope you all like it. Its better than Chapter 2, and the next chapters are even better! Just keep reading...

“Chance makes our parents, but choice makes our friends.”

-Delille

Chapter 4: New Found Friends

Harry was awoken from a dream, by hands shaking him. Harry opened his eyes to find a boy named Zabini looking at him closely. “Harry, wake up! Come on! You have to go to breakfast to get your schedule,” said Zabini.

“What? Oh, yeah!” said Harry, realizing that it was morning.

“You fell asleep on the couch. No one even knew you had left the dormitory,” said Zabini, taking his hands off Harry’s shoulders.

“Yeah, I came up here to...to think,” said Harry quickly, now sitting up on the couch.

“Well, we have to get to the Great Hall. Come on,” said Zabini, walking toward the stone door. Harry got up rubbing the sand from his eyes and followed Zabini out to the Great Hall.

Once Harry entered the Great Hall, he saw that it was crowded; everyone was already there. Zabini must have come back to the Common Room to get him, after he saw that he wasn’t there. He’d have to remember to thank Zabini later. He sat down at the end of the Slytherin table and began eating breakfast.

When most of the students had finished eating, the Head of Houses began handing out the schedules. He read his schedule. For today, which was Monday, Harry had History of Magic first with the Ravensclaws, and then had Charms with the Gryffindors. After Lunch, he had double Transfiguration with the Gryffindors. Tuesday he had double Herbology with the Hufflepuffs first, Defense Against the Dark Arts with the Gryffindors, and then Potions with the Gryffindors; Wednesday he has double Charms, Transfiguration, and History of Magic; Thursday Harry has Herbology, Transfiguration, and then double Defense Against the Dark Arts; and last on Friday, he has double Potions and then a free afternoon. *It could be worse, I suppose.*

Harry quickly ran back to the dormitory to get his bag of books and quills and other things that he had forgotten to take, and ran to find his first class, History of Magic. But Harry got lost on the way. *Why do there have to be so many corridors?* When he entered the classroom, everyone turned to watch him take a seat next to Draco.

“Sorry, Professor... I got lost,” said Harry, nervously.

“Alright. Just sit down and take out your books,” said Professor Binns, a ghost.

The rest of the day went pretty smoothly. Harry went to Charms with Professor Flitwick, a small wizard, and then after lunch, he went to a double Transfiguration with Professor McGonagall. Harry saw that Ron and Hermione were sitting together in the front of the class. They turned when he walked in. Harry waved, but they looked at him like he was off his trolley. *Am I not allowed to wave to someone from another House?*

Harry sat down with Draco. Crabbe and Goyle sat down behind them. *Where was Professor McGonagall? I didn't think that she would be the kind of teacher to be late for class on the first day of school.* All he saw was a gray cat sitting on top of her desk. Once everyone was sitting down, waiting for Professor McGonagall, the cat jumped off the table and turned into Professor McGonagall mid-air.

“Cor!” exclaimed a boy from Gryffindor. Harry heard that his name was Seamus Finnigan. Everyone else was in awe, as well.

She was pacing slowly back and forth in front of the class as she spoke, looking at each student, “Transfiguration is a very complicated magic. It will take some of you a long time to master Transfiguration. But I’m warning all of you, I don’t want any mucking around in my class.”

What is it with the professors and warnings?

The next day, after Herbology with Professor Sprout and lunch, Harry went to his first Defense Against the Dark Arts class. It was another class with Gryffindor, but when he saw Ron and Hermione, he had learned not to wave to them. He sat down towards the back of the

classroom, and Draco sat next to him. Professor Quirrell came out of his little office into the classroom.

"H-hello, c-class," said Professor Quirrell. Harry noticed he always wore a purple turban. He looked around the room while leaning against his desk. "I know t-that this is your f-first school year. This y-year I'll be t-teaching you about c-curses and c-counter curses that might b-be useful if y-you are every in tr-trouble." He turned around to pick up the book on his desk, but as he did a horrible pain shot into Harry's scar.

"Ouch," said Harry, instinctively moving his hands to his head.

"What's up?" asked Draco.

"Nothing. I'm fine," said Harry rubbing his scar. The pain had gone, but he could still feel it. *What was that? My scar never hurt like that before.*

"Everyone t-take out your b-book Defense Against t-the Dark Arts V-volume 1, and read the p-pages on the Disarming S-spell." ("I hate reading," said Draco.) Harry took out his book, flipped to the correct pages and began reading, but it was difficult to concentrate. /p

After class ended, Harry and the rest of the students that had been in Defense Against the Dark Arts went to Potions class. *Well, this is going to be interesting.* Thought Harry, as he walked into the class. Harry took a seat in the very back because he wanted to be as far away from Snape as possible. Harry saw Snape sitting at his desk and their eyes met; Harry saw hate, and he had to look away. Snape got up from his desk where there were various jars, in which there were things that Harry didn't want to know.

"In this Potions class, if you take this class seriously, which I suggest you do because if you don't, *you will fail* . And I do not have a problem failing any of you. You will learn how to create simple potions and later complex potions. There are potions that can make you only speak the truth, potions that can change your appearance, and potions that can kill." He looked at Harry when he said this. *Great it went from Snape hating me to Snape wanting to give me a potion that can kill me. Like I need another thing to worry about.*

After Potions, Harry went to put his books away and decided to go for a walk around the lake before dinner. Harry had been walking for almost an hour when he decided to sit down near the water. Too many questions were crammed into his head. Why Snape hated him since he had done nothing was one. Why his scar hurt earlier this afternoon in Defense Against the Dark Arts was an especially big one? Harry buried his head in his hands.

I think too much. Maybe there's a potion to stop thinking. Or a charm or something! Anything.

"Potter, you alright?" asked a voice from behind. Harry picked up his head and looked around to see Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger walking toward him. It had been Ron that had asked the question.

"Yeah. I'm fine. And you can call me Harry," said Harry, slowly.

"Just checking because you looked a bit down," said Ron.

"Are you sure you're alright?" asked Hermione, more sincerely.

Harry exhaled loudly. "If you really want to know. No. There's so many things that have happened since I've been here that I don't understand," said Harry.

"Like what?" asked Hermione, clearly curious. Ron and Hermione now sat down on either side of Harry.

"Wait a minute! Why would I tell you two? In Transfiguration yesterday I waved to you both to be nice, and you didn't wave, or anything, back," said Harry, looking at them both.

"Well, Harry," said Ron. "Usually Slytherin's aren't nice to Gryffindors or any other House. We thought it was a joke."

"I was waving to be nice. No joke. You two were nice to me on the train and I wanted to be nice back."

Just then Hermione asked the question that Harry was dreading to hear, but knew was eventually going to be asked, "Then why did you leave with Malfoy instead of stay with us?"

Harry didn't have an actual answer. "I... I don't know. Really I don't," said Harry, now looking down at the water.

There was a long pause before Hermione decided to say something again, "Any road... what has been bothering you so much?"

Harry decided to spill what was bothering him. Ron and Hermione looked nice enough to tell, if he were to tell anyone. "Well, your Head of House is supposed to be nice to you, right?" said Harry. "Well, Snape, I can clearly see, hates me. He's hated me since I got here, but I haven't done anything wrong. I've done nothing to deserve his hating me. Before a couple days ago, I didn't even know Hogwarts existed or wizards, for that matter. And the other students keep looking at my scar when I walk by. But another thing that's been bothering me was why no one applauded for me when I got into Slytherin. Do either of you know why that is?" Harry looked at them apprehensively.

It was Hermione that decided to speak, "Well, Harry, no thought that the 'Boy Who Lived' would be put in Slytherin of all Houses."

"I was put into Slytherin. So what?" said Harry.

"Harry, I'm not implying anything, but I don't think you realize that most people sorted into Slytherin have become dark wizards," said Hermione.

"You Know Who was a Slytherin," said Ron.

"Oh," said Harry. And that's all he had to say. Ron and Hermione clearly understood what was going on in Harry's mind.

Was that why I was put into Slytherin and not Gryffindor? But why would You Know Who have an effect on which House I would be placed in? Harry decided to ask the second question to Ron and Hermione. Harry saw on their faces that they had no idea, and Ron said so. "I'd tell you to go to Snape about this, but you said that he hates you, so maybe you should go to Dumbledore?" said Hermione. "He might be able to-"

But at that moment Draco decided to show up. “Harry! What are you doing?” asked Draco. All three of them got up when Draco walked over.

A/N: British vocab lesson: 1. “Off your trolley”—mad, crazy 2. “Mucking around”—when someone “fools around.” Thanks for reading the next chapter. REVIEW! pretty please...?

"In a man's letters, his soul lies naked."

-Samuel Johnson

v

Secret Communication

But at that moment Draco decided to show up. "Harry! What are you doing?" asked Draco. All three of them got up when Draco walked over.

"Nothing. I was just talking to Ron and Hermione," said Harry, innocently.

"You don't want to be caught talking to a Weasley and a Mudblood!" said Draco. Hermione started crying and ran off. Ron followed her, glaring at Draco.

Harry was about to follow them to see if Hermione was okay, but he turned to Draco, "What wrong with you?"

"Nothing. You don't want to be caught talking to them. I was helping you," said Draco, pleased with himself.

Draco was now walking back toward the castle. Harry stayed where he was at first, but then followed Draco. "What's a Mudblood?" asked Harry.

"Hermione Granger," said Draco laughing. Harry wasn't.

"No really. What's a Mudblood?" asked Harry. Draco stopped walking.

"A Mudblood is a person that is has Muggle parents. Non-wizard parents. It means they have dirty blood," said Draco. "Only wizards born into wizarding families belong at Hogwarts, Harry. Only the purebloods, like you and me," said Draco. They started walking again.

Why would only purebloods deserve to be at Hogwarts. Hermione is a very nice and caring girl. She deserves to be here just as much as anyone else. No one can say who's allowed and who's not allowed to

be at Hogwarts. But Harry knew it would only lead to bad things if he brought that up.

Hermione was right. He should go see Dumbledore with his problems, thought Harry, as him and Draco walked toward the Great Hall. Dumbledore might be able to help. *But isn't Dumbledore busy? I don't want to intrude on anything when I visit him. When could I go though?* Harry thought over his schedule and realized that he had Friday afternoon free. He decided he would go then.

Harry felt a lot better knowing that he was going to see Dumbledore on Friday, but of course he had to get through the rest of the week first.

After dinner, Harry and Draco went to the Common Room to start on homework. It's the second day of school and he's got homework to do. Harry decided to start on his Transfiguration homework. He had to read about how to change a pencil into a worm, and then actually do it the next time they had class. Draco started on Potions homework, which was to read about some potion. He couldn't even remember the name. Draco finished before him and went to talk to Crabbe and Goyle.

When Harry finished, he went down to the dormitory to put some books away. Once he entered, Harry saw that Hedwig was sitting on his bed with a letter.

"Hiya, Hedwig," said Harry as he took the letter off Hedwig's leg. He unfolded the parchment. It was probably from Hagrid. As he opened it he saw that he didn't recognize the handwriting. It was very organized and smooth.

Harry,

I thought that maybe we could be able to contact each other by using owls, if you don't want Malfoy to know that you're talking to us. Ron and I know that you're a good person and that you never meant to hurt us. Anyway, using owls would be the easiest way to talk when we can't in person. But make sure that you hide the letters we give you. I'll find a spell to somehow change the look of the letters, if you want. Ron suggests that we should find a place to talk with you

privately, like a room, since we obviously can't talk in public. Think on it,

Hermione & Ron

Using owls would be the easiest way to communicate and the safest from others right now. I will have to hide the letters. But maybe we could hide the letters differently just in case someone does find them? Changing our names! My name could be... Sly One. No, I don't want to remind them I'm in Slytherin. Err... Courageous. Yeah, that will do. And a place we could talk? There is the room that Draco showed me, but he knows about it, so that contradicts the whole point of trying to find a place to talk. I'll have to explore the castle a bit more and not with Draco. But how can I explore with no one knowing? I guess I'll just have to explore at night and be very watchful and listen carefully for footsteps. Snape would murder me if he found me outside the Slytherin walls after dark. Maybe there's a spell to enhance hearing that Hermione could teach me? I better write back.

Harry went to his trunk and took out a bit of parchment and ink and a quill.

Hermione & Ron,

On the night we arrived, Draco showed me a room that would be perfect to talk in because its hidden, but I immediately threw out that idea because he knows about that room. I could show it to you two sometime anyway. It's an amazing room. And I thought about what you said about hiding the letters. What about disguising ourselves with different names? Just in case someone does find these letters they won't know to whom they were for or where they came from. I thought I could be "Courageous." Send me back what your names will be. And by the way, thanks for saying I'm a good person. I think that you two are very caring people and I'm glad that we're now friends,

Courageous

Harry folded the parchment and tied it to Hedwig's leg, and Hedwig flew off towards the door. Harry knew that it would get to Ron and Hermione in a few minutes. Harry took off his shoes and glasses and

lay down on his bed with his arm over his eyes. He needed to relax while he waited for Ron and Hermione to respond.

Harry must have fallen asleep because he awoke to Hedwig nibbling on his fingers.

“Ouch,” said Harry, sitting up. He had only been asleep for ten minutes at most, but it seemed to have helped. Harry felt a bit more refreshed. He took off the letter that had been attached to Hedwig’s leg, and put his glasses back on to read it.

Courageous,

That’s a brilliant idea! I wonder how the thought hadn’t come to me. My name will be “Cleverly” and he will be “Humorous.” I’m sure you know whom I mean. Humorous said that he’d like to see this room, and as much as I’d like to see this room too, I just don’t know when you could show it to us. The corridors would have to be deserted for them to be safe for us all to talk. For now letters will have to do, but talking in person would be better and more efficient. Plus, if your owl is constantly seen going back from where we are to where you are, then it might look suspicious. And thanks for your compliment. Being cautious,

Cleverly & Humorous

Maybe a little too cautious. I mean, really, what are we going to talk about? Homework? Teachers? Well, whatever we do talk about in the future, I doubt it would be very secretive.

Harry practically snorted while he was laughing at the idea that they were going to talk about secretive things that people would actually want to read about.

Harry decided that later this week he would have to go exploring in the night for that room that they can talk in away from interested ears. Harry wasn’t going to write back because he didn’t have any more brilliant ideas. He’ll write back later with news of whether he was able to find a room.

Harry took the two letters, folded them, and put them in a pocket in his trunk. That pocket was now the place where he would keep all his letters from Ron and Hermione, and from anyone else if he were ever to get any, Harry thought.

Harry looked up to see that Hedwig had gone. She had probably gone to the Owlry. Harry turned back to his trunk to see what he could put on the table next to his bed that was currently bare, except for a green lamp. If he's going to be constantly writing Hermione and Ron, then he should be prepared. Harry emptied a small wooden box from his trunk and put in bits of parchment as well as an extra quill and an extra bottle of ink. Harry closed his trunk and got up to see that Hedwig was back with another letter.

What now Hermione? /i But to Harry's pleasant surprise, it wasn't from Hermione or Ron. It was a letter from Hagrid. Harry saw Hagrid's scratchy handwriting instantly, not Hermione's smooth writing.

Harry,

I thought we could have a talk about how school has been for you so far. The only time I see you are when we eat, but, of course, I sit at the High Table. This week I have a lot of stuff to do for Dumbledore. Maybe next week we could talk. Hope school's not too bad,

Hagrid

Harry took out a piece of parchment from the box and began to write back.

Hagrid,

Next week will be good. I have Friday afternoons free of classes. I'd like to talk to you about some things that have been on my mind since coming here. I've talked to Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger about my thoughts. They've definitely helped me a bit, but I'd like to talk to you, as well. Tell me when you're not busy,

Harry

After watching Hedwig fly away down the corridor, Harry put the box on his bedside table next to his lamp, put his shoes back on, and began walking back toward the Common Room.

"Harry, where have you been?" asked Nott, curiously.

"Just putting some books away," said Harry, taking a seat.

"I thought you went looking around the school without me," said Draco, sitting down on the chair across from him.

"No, I was just downstairs. Plus, you're the one who knows all the rooms," said Harry. He said the last part only to Draco, in a whisper.

"True, true," said Draco, in a whisper, as well. Harry knew that Draco was thinking too highly of himself now.

"Don't be a prat, Draco," said Harry, with a smile on his face.

"Oh, like you could find a better room?" said Draco.

"Maybe I could. There have got to be tons of rooms in Hogwarts. I'm bound to find a better room than yours," said Harry, arrogantly.

"Yeah, I bet," said Draco sarcastically, but he knew that Harry was probably right. Harry could see that Draco was thinking this, since it was written all over his face.

"Well, Harry, since you think that you could find a better room, do you want to go looking around?" asked Draco.

"Not tonight. I'm knackered," said Harry.

"Fine, then we'll go during the weekend. Saturday night. Got it?"

"Alright," Harry replied.

Harry looked around the Common Room after Draco got up, and saw that younger students and some older students were looking at him. *Can't they get sick of looking at me, already? I'm not that interesting.* Harry turned back, but then Zabini, came up to him. /p

“Hey, Potter. I was wondering if you wanted to play a game of Wizard Chess,” said Zabini.

“I don’t know how to play regular chess,” said Harry, a bit embarrassed. “No one ever taught me.”

“Do you want me to teach you?” Zabini asked.

“Yeah, alright,” said Harry, excited. “And by the way you can call me Harry.”

After teaching Harry about each figurine on the board, they played, if you could call it playing, since Zabini always beat him in about a minute flat. But this game was different, and Harry now understood why it was called Wizard Chess. The figurines on the board broke the other figurines when they had to take their spot, instead of Harry moving them off the board. After a while, Harry got a bit better, but he still hadn’t beat Zabini.

“Hey, Harry!” said Zabini.

“What you told me I could do that move!” said Harry.

“No, it’s not that. Is that your owl? She’s on the back of your chair,” Zabini told Harry. Harry looked around to see Hedwig with yet another letter.

“Oh, yeah it is. Thanks,” said Harry taking the letter.

“Who’s it from?” asked Zabini. He was leaning forward to look at the letter, but Harry moved it closer to himself.

“A friend,” said Harry, reluctant to let Zabini look at it. “This will just take a minute. Sorry.” Harry walked over to a table in the corner that had extra parchment and a quill.

Harry,

I’m curious as to what problems you already have. Next Friday would be fine. Lets say one in the afternoon right after lunch. See you then,

Hagrid

Harry folded the parchment and put it in his pocket. He ripped a piece of parchment on the table and wrote back to Hagrid that he would see him at one next Friday. Harry walked back to the table with Zabini and Hedwig waiting. As Hedwig flew off, Harry began to play chess again.

A/N: More vocab: 1. "Prat"—someone who's being an ass. 2. "Knackered"—beat, tired, exhausted. Hopefully the next chapter will be up soon. Thanks for reading! Please Review! Pretty please...

"It is not every question that deserves an answer."

-Syrus

vi

Answered and Unanswered Questions

Harry wanted the week to go by faster, so that he could talk with Dumbledore, but time seemed to have slowed down just for him. Each class went by so slow; that Harry had to constantly check his watch to make sure that time was even moving at all. But on Friday, Harry was very impatient during Potions. And he guessed that Snape saw this because after class had ended, he asked Harry to clean some other tables, which students had left covered in random ingredients. Harry knew that Snape was making him clean because he hated him. But this just made Harry want to see Dumbledore even more.

"What's the rush, Potter?" asked Snape, with a smirk. "You still haven't cleaned the tables near the door." Snape was clearly enjoying seeing Harry frustrated to get out of the Dungeons. After Harry had cleaned all the tables that needed cleaning, he grabbed his bag and ran for the door, and went to put his books away. He knew he could eat later, so he decided to see Dumbledore now.

But as Harry was walking in front of Professor McGonagall's classroom, he realized that there was one thing that Harry hadn't thought about. i Where was Dumbledore's office? How am I supposed to go there, when I have no idea where it is? I can't ask Snape. I don't want him knowing that I want to see Dumbledore. /i Harry was standing in the hall, when Professor McGonagall came out of the classroom.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Potter," Professor McGonagall said, as she began to walk towards the Great Hall.

"Professor, where is Dumbledore's office?" said Harry, not completely sure he should have asked. But the words seemed to have flew right out of his mouth.

"You want to see Dumbledore, Potter?" asked Professor McGonagall.

"Yes, I would like to speak with him." Harry said a little more confident this time.

"Err... alright. I don't think he's busy at the moment." Professor McGonagall began walking and Harry had to almost jog to keep up with her. *My god! If this is her walking, I wonder how fast she runs!* After a minute, they were in front of a statue of a stone gargoyle. Professor McGonagall muttered, "Butterbeer" and the gargoyle moved aside as the wall divided to reveal magnificent stairs. They seemed to be moving, to Harry's astonishment, just like an escalator. Professor McGonagall told Harry to jump onto the stairs and after he did, she quickly followed. After some spiraling upward they were in front of Dumbledore's door, and Professor McGonagall spoke to Harry again.

"Wait out here, for a minute," She said with a strict tone in her voice. As she opened the door, he saw Dumbledore look up from writing, at Professor McGonagall entering and at him waiting outside. Harry could hear them speaking behind the closed door. But they were talking so low that he couldn't make out what they were saying. So, Harry decided he didn't want to try to decipher their mumbles. He leaned against the wall waiting until the door opened.

When the door did open, Professor McGonagall walked out. "You may speak to Dumbledore now."

"Thank you for bringing me, professor." Harry gave her a weak smile. She turned and walked away. Harry opened the door to Dumbledore's office that now stood ajar.

"Professor Dumbledore?" Harry said, as he opened the door completely and then once he had walked through, closed it. Dumbledore was sitting at his desk looking straight at Harry. Harry was now hesitant to continue walking, but he did so anyway. "I wanted to speak to you about some things that have been bothering me."

He now stood in front of Dumbledore's desk. "Take a seat, Harry. Alright, what has been worrying you?"

"Well, the first thing that happened that has worried me, was why no one applauded for me, like they did for the other first years. I don't understand. Hermione and Ron said that it was because I'm 'The Boy Who Lived' and that You Know Who was in Slytherin, but how would that effect me?" Harry almost managed to say this in one breath.

"Well, first of all, call him by his real name: Voldemort. You shouldn't be afraid of a name, Harry; that only makes people more afraid of the person," said Dumbledore. He stopped and thought for a second before continuing. "Hmm... I see that you've become friends with those two from Gryffindor. That interests me..."

"Why does that interest you? I talked to them on the train on the way to Hogwarts and we became friends. But it's hard to talk to them since they're in Gryffindor. Draco Malfoy says that I shouldn't talk to them because they don't deserve to be here, but I definitely don't believe that! So, Ron, Hermione, and I communicate through Hedwig, my owl," said Harry.

"Good thinking. And that interests me, Harry, because both your parents were in Gryffindor and you... you managed to get yourself into Slytherin, which I find unusual, but incredible. But the fact that you are better friends with Ron and Hermione, suggests to me that you really belong in Gryffindor. Did the Sorting Hat say anything about Gryffindor?"

How would he know that? "How did you know that? I thought no one could hear the Sorting Hat, but me? It said that I was the most difficult choice it ever had to make. The Sorting Hat said that I would fit in well in Gryffindor, but that I would go far in Slytherin," said Harry, as he let go one of his secrets.

"You were the only one that could hear what the Sorting Hat said, don't worry, but I guessed that it must have said something about Gryffindor. But you are in Slytherin, and yes, Voldemort, was in Slytherin as well. Hermione is right to think that there is a connection between you two, because you are now connected through the night that he killed your parents," said Dumbledore, who was now twiddling his fingers. Harry supposed that Dumbledore didn't realize he was

doing that. "Other students have probably guessed this, too, Harry, or else they would have applauded for you."

"But *how* are we connected through that night. I don't understand," said Harry.

"In time, you will come to understand. But for now, let's move on." Harry didn't want to. He wanted to know how he was connected to Voldemort, but he remembered something Dumbledore had said.

"Wait? My parents were in Gryffindor? I knew after I was sorted that something felt wrong," said Harry, the volume of his voice going from loud to almost inaudible.

"Yes, they were, and that's why it's a bit difficult to comprehend why you were put into Slytherin. But, then again, you were placed into Slytherin for a reason, Harry."

"And what reason would that be?" asked Harry, a bit sarcastic.

"Only time can tell, Harry. So, what other things are bothering you?" asked Dumbledore.

"During, my first Defense Against the Dark Arts class, my scar hurt, and I was just worried about that because it's never hurt me before," said Harry, afterwards feeling slightly foolish for bringing it up.

"Hmm... well, I don't know why it would hurt you. That certainly is something new to ponder about. And don't worry I will because I've never heard of someone's scar hurting them after about 10 years of healing. But after I think about that for a while I'll tell you anything that comes to mind. Anything else bothering you?"

"Well... I think Snape hates me," said Harry, in a completely serious voice that sounded like he was joking.

"Hate, Harry? Hate is a strong word," said Dumbledore, looking at him intently.

"I know, but every time he looks at me, I can see the anger in his eyes. It was there since the first night I got here. I don't think I did

anything wrong, and yet he glares at me. In class, in the halls, in the Great Hall,” Harry said, as he looked down.

“Well, I could talk to him about that, but I don’t think that would help. That would, most likely, only make it worse,” said Dumbledore. /p

“Let’s not make it worse,” said Harry, thinking about the way Snape looked at him when he spoke about a killing potion in their first class.

“Well, I can’t tell you the story because, honestly, it’s not my story to tell. But all I can say is that Professor Snape and your father were in the same year, here at Hogwarts. And, I’m sure that tons of people have already told you how much you resemble James,” said Dumbledore. “Well, I’m famished. You go get something to eat, because too much thinking really does wear a person out, and I’ll see you down there.”

“Okay, thank you, Professor,” said Harry, confused, as he got up from the seat and began walking toward the door.

“And, Harry, if you need to talk again, just knock on my door or ask Professor McGonagall or Professor Snape. Well, maybe not Professor Snape. Goodbye, Harry.”

“Bye, professor,” said Harry as he closed the door.

Harry couldn’t stop thinking about what Dumbledore had said about how Snape and his father had been in the same year here at Hogwarts; that both his parents had been in Gryffindor, but he was in Slytherin, which was partly due to Voldemort. Harry thought about this all the way to the Great Hall. He walked in and realized that it was no longer lunch, but dinner. Dumbledore and he had talked for a long time. More people began filing into the Great Hall, and Harry eventually saw Ron and Hermione come in. Harry knew that he had to tell them about what he and Dumbledore had spoken about. As he finished, Harry realized that he never saw Dumbledore arrive or leave the Great Hall.

But Harry knew that Dumbledore was a busy man. As Harry got up, he heard a low voice behind him, that made him turn around, “Tomorrow night, Harry, hope you didn’t forget,” said Draco.

"No, of course I didn't forget. We just can't get caught because Snape would murder me on the spot," said Harry almost in a whisper. The rest of the conversation was spoken at a regular volume.

"I told you not to think about that. He doesn't hate you. Snape's just in a nark... all the time."

"Yeah, I hope your right," said Harry.

Once they got into the Common Room, Harry walked straight for the dormitory to get his box of parchment. As Harry was leaving the Common Room to go the Owlry, Nott stopped him in his tracks by questioning him. "Harry, why are you always running off somewhere?" This question got the attention of Draco, Crabbe, Goyle, and Zabini, as well as some others near them. Harry noticed that they were all looking at him.

"I'm just writing a couple letters," said Harry quickly.

"To whom?" asked Draco, who was standing next to him now.

"That's none of your business," said Harry, as he touched his hand to the stone.

"Well, you might want to get some sleep tonight, as you won't be getting any tomorrow night," said Draco in a whisper. Harry looked at him, then walked out toward the Owlry.

As much as I hate to admit it, Draco is right. Tomorrow we won't be getting a lot of sleep since we'll be looking for another room, and also be looking around every corner. Yes, there are tons of rooms in Hogwarts, but most have them are probably just empty classrooms. This is going to be harder than I thought. Won't Draco be pleased?

Harry walked into the Owlry to see Ron and Hermione writing a letter, probably to him. "Oh, Harry! You scared us," said Hermione. "We were just writing you a letter."

"That's funny because I came up here to write you a letter," said Harry. "I have a lot of information that I thought you two might want to hear."

“What’s the info about?” asked Ron putting away some parchment.

“Maybe we shouldn’t talk here. Anyone could just come up here and listen. We could go to a deserted corridor on either the fifth or sixth floor,” suggested Harry. “Hardly anyone goes up there.”

“Okay,” said Ron, excitedly, waiting to hear the news.

Once they had reached the fifth floor, Harry began to tell them about his conversation with Dumbledore. “So, that’s what Dumbledore thinks about you being put into Slytherin,” said Hermione.

“Your parents were in Gryffindor and you were put into Slytherin? What happened to you?” said Ron jokingly. He was actually laughing now, and so was Harry.

“Oh, thanks,” said Harry sarcastically, after he calmed down.

“Come on, this is serious. I keep thinking about the last thing that Dumbledore said about Harry’s father and Professor Snape being in the same year,” said Hermione. “And then he mentioned that you look like your father. That leads to nowhere. I’ll need more time to think on it.” Harry and Ron had stopped laughing and were now thinking about Harry’s father and Snape, too. But even with two more people thinking, it wasn’t leading to anywhere.

After an hour of endless thinking and talking that lead to no conclusions, they said their goodbye’s and all departed from the fifth floor.

Harry went straight to the dormitory, he definitely needed some sleep. As he lay down almost drifting into sleep, he remembered what Draco had said earlier about Snape before going into the Common Room. “He doesn’t hate you.” And just then things connected. Snape doesn’t just hate him, he hated Harry’s father, but Harry looks so much like his father, so Snape is taking out his aggression out on Harry. He’d have to write to Ron and Hermione in the morning. Just then, Harry drifted off to sleep.

A/N: “In a nark”—in a bad mood. Hope you all continue reading! And please review.Thanks. Sara

“Concealed talent brings no reputation.”

-Erasmus

vii

While On The Quidditch Field

Harry awoke and saw that no one else was in the dorm. He checked his watch and saw that the time was 8:54. The rest of the people in the dormitory must have gone up to breakfast already. But he was grateful that Zabini didn't wake him up this time because he desperately had needed that long sleep. Harry remembered that he wanted to write to Ron and Hermione about how he finally got the connection Dumbledore spoke about.

Harry decided that he was going to go quickly to the Owlry, and then go eat some breakfast. Once he sent the letter with Hedwig, he went straight to the Great Hall.

As Harry went into the Great Hall, so did Hedwig, and Harry saw Hedwig fly to the Gryffindor table. He just hoped that none of the Slytherin's recognized Harry's owl. Harry sat down next to Nott and Draco. “Well, you finally got up, I see,” said Draco. “You must have been dead knackered.”

Harry yawned. “Yeah, guess so. What's for breakfast?”

“Lots of things,” replied Nott.

“Good, 'cause I'm starving,” said Harry filling his plate.

As, Harry ate, he saw Hermione and Ron read his letter, but it was a good thing they didn't send a letter back because Hedwig would have flew right across the room, and that would have made the other Slytherin's very suspicious. He saw Hedwig fly away with no letter. When Harry looked back, he saw that Hermione was looking at him nodding her head, and he nodded back. Harry checked the High Table to see if Dumbledore was there, but he wasn't; he only saw Snape, who was thankfully not glaring at him, but talking to another teacher that Harry didn't know.

The morning went by pretty fast, considering he didn't do to much. Draco, Nott, Zabini, Crabbe, Goyle, and Harry went to the Quidditch field to watch the Slytherin Quidditch team fly around on their brooms to practice. He heard Zabini say that the Slytherin Quidditch team needed a Seeker. "What's a Seeker?" asked Harry.

"I keep forgetting, actually, I think we all keep forgetting that you didn't know about wizards because you used to live with Muggles. Well, the Seeker is the person that tries to catch a little ball, called the Golden Snitch," said Zabini. "Catching the Snitch is worth one hundred and fifty points and when the Seeker catches it, it ends the game."

"And what are the other players?" asked Harry.

"There are three Chasers, two Beaters, a Keeper, and a Seeker. The Chasers have to get the Quaffle, a big red ball, into those three hoops," said Zabini, now pointing to the three hoops on either side of the field. Even though the others knew this, they listened, too. "While our Keeper has to prevent the others teams Chasers from getting the ball into our hoops. Each time, a Chaser gets the Quaffle in, its ten points for their team. And the Beaters have clubs that help them get the two Bludgers, which are two medium-sized black balls, away from their Chasers and at the other teams Chasers. And then there's the Seeker, which I mentioned before."

"Well, I didn't know Quidditch was that complicated, but I think I got the idea," said Harry. He looked up to see one of the Chasers put the Quaffle through the highest hoop.

"Good, 'cause I'm not explaining it again," said Zabini, jokingly.

"Do any of you have a broom?" Harry asked, still looking at the older students.

"I have one, but the first years aren't allowed to bring their brooms because they aren't allowed to be on the teams. I hate those rules," said Draco, folding his arms.

"I have one, too," said the others almost in unison.

"I wish I had mine here," said Draco.

"I wish I had one," said Harry sadly.

"If you want to be on the Quidditch team next year, I think Madam Hooch has extra brooms," said Nott.

"But they are dead old!" said Draco. Crabbe and Goyle were laughing now.

"Well, I don't know if I'm even good at Quidditch," said Harry.

"Well, the Slytherin team look like they are coming down for a break, we can ask to borrow their brooms and test you," said Zabini.

They all got up to ask if they could borrow the brooms. When the older students said they could, Nott asked Harry which position he wanted to play and Harry had no idea. "Don't you remember what I told you about the players?" asked Zabini.

"Yeah, I just don't know which one I would be best at playing," replied Harry. He was a bit frustrated.

"Well, I like playing a chaser," said Zabini.

"And so do I," said Nott.

"Crabbe and Goyle like being Beaters, and I like being a Chaser, as well," said Draco. "So you can be the Seeker or Keeper. Which one do you think you would be better at?"

"Err... I guess Seeker. I don't think I'd be a good Keeper. And it doesn't seem that hard to catch the Snitch," said Harry. The rest of them were laughing now. "What?" Harry had no idea what they were laughing about.

"You think it's easy to catch the Snitch? The Seeker is the hardest position to play. The Snitch is very small and incredibly fast," said Nott.

"Oh and you guys gave me the most difficult position!" said Harry.

“Well, we didn’t know. We were just giving ourselves the positions we already like, and none of us like playing Seeker,” said Zabini.

They started walking out onto the field. “First we’ll help you, and then we can all play,” said Zabini. He went to the large chest in the middle of the field and opened it. He took out the Snitch and Harry saw how small really is. It was about the size of a golf ball.

“Bloody hell! I have to catch that?” said Harry, unable to take in that information.

“I told you it was small,” said Zabini.

“Well, let’s do this,” said Harry, preparing himself to be really embarrassed. He looked over his shoulder and saw the older Slytherin’s watching. *Great I’m going to make a fool of myself in front of the older students, as well. I’ve never even been on a broom before!*

“Ready?” asked Draco. They were all mounting their brooms, and Harry did so, as well.

“Not really,” said Harry.

“And push off,” said Nott. He pushed off the ground, like the others, but they were already used to flying, so it took him a while to keep his balance. “Don’t worry, Harry, you’ll get used to it,” said Zabini, flying over him. “Fly around a bit and it’ll get easier.”

As he flew around, Harry saw that, surprisingly, it wasn’t that bad and that he got the hang of it quickly. “Alright, Harry, I’m going to throw the Snitch into the air and I want you to fly toward it and do your best to catch it. Its okay if you don’t get it on the first try,” said Zabini.

Harry watched, as if in slow motion, Zabini throw the Snitch into the air. Harry saw it go past his head and he flew after it at an incredible speed. “Cor!” said Nott. He was surprised at how fast Harry was going, and so was everyone else. On the ground, the older Slytherin’s couldn’t stop watching; they were in amazement. Harry locked his eyes on the Snitch and followed it. When he was close enough to grab it, he took his left hand off the broom and reached forward.

Harry almost fell because he wasn't used to flying and needed both hands, but he surged forward a bit more and felt his hand wrap around it. He heard the others cheer because he had caught it. Harry was focused so much on catching the Snitch that he didn't concentrate on balance, and fell off the broom, but it didn't matter because he was only a couple feet off the ground.

"Bloody hell, Harry! That was amazing! Are you sure you've never been on a broom before?" asked Zabini, as he flew down to the ground. The rest followed.

"No, I've never been on a broom. That was the first time ever," said Harry, getting up from the ground. He looked at the Snitch in his hand with nothing, but utter shock. *I caught this! I was up there on a broom, flying around and I caught this! I can't believe it!*

The Slytherin Quidditch players came over to Harry. "Hey, Potter, do you want to be on the Quidditch team? We need a Seeker," said the boy closest to him, who Harry guessed was the captain and who looked like a troll.

He was going to say definitely, but Zabini asked a question that brought Harry back to reality. "But I thought first years weren't allowed to be on the Quidditch teams?"

"I'll ask if we can bend the rules for Potter, who was completely amazing. You must have gotten that Snitch in a couple of seconds!" said the captain.

"I didn't realize it was that short of time, it seemed longer," said Harry.

"Harry, you don't have to be modest. You are clearly a natural," said Zabini.

"Potter, I'll ask Snape and he'll ask Dumbledore if you would be able to be put on the team because you would, obviously, help us win. Can you be in the Common Room this evening? I'll tell you what Snape said," said the captain.

Harry doubted very much that Snape would let him on the team, since he hated him, but if the players persuaded Snape, he might be

nice. *Yeah, right! Snape is not nice. Hopefully nice enough to let me be on the team, though.* “Yeah, I’ll be in the Common Room,” said Harry.

“Okay, I’ll give you the news. Sorry, mates, but we need our brooms back,” said the captain, as him and the rest of the team walked away with brooms in their hands.

“Harry, if you get on the team, you’re going to need a broom,” Nott told Harry.

“Do you have money to buy one?” asked Draco.

“Yeah, I have a vault at Gringotts with some money,” Harry told them. “But how would I get to Diagon Alley to buy one if we can’t leave the school?” Harry asked.

“You don’t have to leave school, I have an old newspaper with an ad from *The Golden Broom*. If you send in your name, vault number, and the type of broom you want, they’ll send you the broom in two days,” said Nott.

Once they were all back in the Common Room, they started looking at the ad. They talked for a while about brooms, and then the Quidditch captain came in. “Potter.” Harry walked over to him. “Welcome to the team. Let me introduce you to everyone. I’m the captain Marcus Flint. This here is one of our other Chasers Adrian Pucey the other is Terrance Higgs. Our Keeper is this Miles Bletchley, and our Beaters are Bole and Derrick,” he said, as he held out his hand. Harry got up and shook it.

“Thanks,” said Harry, smiling. He was completely surprised that Snape and Dumbledore allowed him on the team.

“Now that you’re on the team, you’re going to have practice with us. We practice every Tuesday and Thursday on the Quidditch field at six. And when a game is coming up, we also practice on Friday, as well. Don’t be late.”

“Okay, I’ll be there,” said Harry. The Flint and the rest of the team walked down to the dormitory. Harry walked back to the others.

“So, now that I’m on the team, what broom should I get?” said Harry with a grin on his face.

“Congrats!” said Zabini, shaking his hand.

“Thanks,” said Harry.

“What broom you’re going to get depends on how much you want to spend and how much you got,” said Draco.

“Well, I want a good broom, but I don’t want to empty my vault,” Harry answered.

“The newest broom is called a Nimbus 2000 and it’s a dead good broom. It won’t empty your vault... completely. It might nearly, though,” said Nott.

“It’s fine, where’s the parchment?” said Harry, he knew that he had a lot of money, so it wouldn’t be a considerable chunk from his vault. He wrote down his name, his vault number, and Nimbus 2000, and went to the Owlry to send it off to the *The Golden Broom*.

Once he came back into the Common Room, people started coming up to him and congratulating him on making the team. “Which one of you was it that told everyone else?” said Harry jokingly.

“Not I!” said Zabini, who was being sarcastic. “What? Can’t I be happy that you, a first year, were able to be put on the Quidditch team?”

“Sure you can be happy, but you don’t have to tell everyone,” said Harry, who was now shaking two people’s hands at once.

After shaking almost everyone’s hand, some people started heading towards the dormitories to go to sleep. Harry and Draco waited for the last person to leave and finally got up from their seats.

A/N: Just incase you forgot “knackered” means “exhausted;” “dead” means “very;” and someone says “cor” when they’re surprised. And do review! I thought I’d be nice and give you, mates, a summary forthe next chapter:

Harry and Draco go exploring the castle, once again, because Harry said that he could find a better room than what Draco had shown him. But the room they find is not what they were expecting...

"Fear always springs from ignorance."

-Emerson, *The American Dream*

viii

Close Call

As it was nearing midnight, there was no one left in the Slytherin Common Room, but Harry and Draco. "Everyone's gone we can leave now," said Draco, as he got up from one of the couches. Harry got up, too, and headed for the door. Draco turned to him. "Ready?"

"As ready as I'll ever be," said Harry, not too thrilled to be going out into the Hogwarts halls at night. He touched his hand to the stone and it opened. It seemed a lot louder at night than during the day. They walked out into the corridor.

"We'll just go searching around for a room. Well, *you'll* just go searching around for a room, and I'll just follow behind you," said Draco. "I'll watch your back."

"Err... thanks," said Harry. They both crossed the corridor. "Right. Well, on the first floor there's really just the Great Hall, and on the second floor there's the room you showed me. So, let's go to the third floor, then later we could go to the fourth. We'll... I'll look around."

Once they reached the third floor, they began looking into the rooms and even behind statues and suits of armor that were on the left-hand side. The rooms that they looked in, were either empty classrooms with tons of dust and spider webs everywhere or very large, also empty, closets.

"Where are the bloody good rooms?" asked Harry, frustrated after coming out of another empty classroom, his voice a little too loud.

"Shhhh... you're the one who's supposed to find the room, not me," said Draco, leaning against the wall casually.

"Well, a little help would be nice, but since I know that you're not going to help me, lets start looking on the right-hand side," said Harry, walking to the next door. He stopped short remembering something.

"What?" asked Draco, concern in his voice.

"Didn't Dumbledore and Snape say something about not going somewhere on the right-hand side of some floor? Was it this floor?" asked Harry.

"Oh. Wasn't it the fourth floor? I don't remember," said Draco. They were both trying to remember what Dumbledore had said. "Well, if you suddenly get killed, I'll remember you," said Draco, jokingly.

"Thanks. I'll remember you, if you get killed," said Harry, also joking. He turned around to face the door and began to open it, when Draco pulled him by his collar from behind and brought him behind a suit of armor.

"Cor!" said Harry, startled. Draco covered Harry's mouth with his hand and peeked behind the armor to check the corridor. Harry was rubbing his neck.

"Shhhh... I saw Mrs. Norris," said Draco, in a whisper, taking his hand away. Mrs. Norris, Filch the Caretaker's cat, prowls the corridors when he's not. "We'll wait, then we can continue searching." *Oh, of course, we wouldn't stop. Even though we almost got caught.*

They stood there for a good five minutes until they were sure that the coast was clear. "Lets go through the door across the hall," said Harry. "The one that I started to open."

"Sounds good to me. I just want to get out of the hall," said Draco. They crept across the hall into the room. Draco closed the door silently and followed Harry further into the room. As Harry looked around, he saw that the room wasn't as dusty as the others. Some parts of the room weren't even dusty at all. Harry immediately knew that this room had been used recently for something, he just didn't know what.

"Look, there's another door," said Draco, pointing to a large wooden door at the end of the room. The door looked very heavy and hard to move. Harry said this to Draco.

"True," said Draco, a tone of disappointment in his voice. "But we'll never know if we can't move it, if we don't try." He seemed a bit happier after he said this.

"Okay," said Harry, springing forward. He wanted to see what was behind the door, too.

After standing in front of the door and trying to pull it open, they saw that it was locked. "Bloody door," said Draco.

"Do you know a spell to unlock it?" asked Harry.

"Oh... um. *Alohomora*." Harry heard the door click and unlock itself. Harry and Draco put both their hands against the door and began to push it open, to find that it wasn't as heavy as they expected, but the door still wasn't light.

At first, all they saw was an empty room, but whilst they continued to open it, they saw asleep a massive three-headed dog. Just then the door, let out a loud creaking noise, and the tree-headed dog awoke and got up. Harry looked from its three heads to its too many legs, and saw that it really was massive. Harry noticed subconsciously that there was a lock on the floor, but he didn't have time to think about it. It started growling at them, and Harry and Draco couldn't help themselves from screaming. They grabbed the door, pulled it shut as fast as they could, and ran out into the corridor.

"We need to get out of here. Someone definitely heard us scream and they're probably on their way right now," said Harry, out of breath.

"Well then, lets go!" said Draco, also out of breath.

As silently as they possibly could, they ran all the way back to the Common Room. Once they got through, they both collapsed on a couch. All of that running had worn them out completely. But the first thing Harry thought was that he had to tell Ron and Hermione, but he knew that they wouldn't be awake now, it was almost three in the

morning. He would have to tell them tomorrow. Draco and him had been roaming the third floor for about three hours trying to find a room.

"Bloody hell! What was that?" asked Draco, who was lying on his back.

"Apparently, it was a massive three-headed dog," said Harry. He was having trouble taking in what he had just said. *A massive three-headed dog? I must be seeing things, but then again Draco saw it, too.* "The question is: What the hell is it doing here at Hogwarts?"

"Good question," said Draco.

"We can't tell anyone about this, Draco. That was definitely the forbidden room Dumbledore warned us about, and no one can know that we were there or we would get in serious trouble," said Harry, very serious.

"Now we know why he warned us about it," said Draco. "Well, I got to hand it to you, Harry, you did find a better room. In a way."

"Funny," said Harry, sarcastically.

They were lying on the couches for about half a second after Draco said that, when the stone door to the Common Room began to open. They both jumped up and hid behind the largest green couch. Harry looked around the side of the couch where he wouldn't be seen, and saw Snape and Filch come in. Filch was, thankfully, not carrying or followed by Mrs. Norris. Harry practically held his breath. They were probably here to check whether the students that had screamed, had been from Slytherin and to see if they were still in the Common Room.

"No one's here," said Snape. Harry saw that Filch looked disappointed. He liked "disciplining" students, as he would call it. "They either went to the dormitory already or they were from a different House."

"The other Head of Houses are checking their Common Rooms, too," said Filch. "When we go back, we'll find out whether they found any students."

“Are you sure you heard more than one person scream?” asked Snape. /p

“Positive. Why?” asked Filch, curiously.

“Lets just say that if it was one student, then I’d have known who it was, but since it was more than one...” said Snape, his voice trailing off into nothing. Harry knew that the student he was talking about was he. “We’d better get back.”

They both left the Common Room, and Harry filled his lungs with air, as he could breathe again. The stone door slid back shut.

“That was close,” said Harry, as he stood up.

“Too close,” said Draco. “Lets get to the dormitory, just in case someone else decides to come in and look around.”

Once Harry got to his bed, he was almost going to go to sleep in his clothes because he was so tired to change, but he did it anyway. He crawled into bed, and fell asleep almost instantly.

A/N: I hope you liked this chapter. I think its a pretty good chapter, but if you think otherwise don't be afraid to tell me.

By the way: I want to know what kind of animal Harry would turn into if her were an animagus. Please put that into your review!

“It is difficult to say who you do the most mischief: enemies with the worst intentions or friends with the best.”

-E.R. Bulwer-Lytton

ix

Afternoon Discussion

For Harry, the week went by pretty quickly. He went to his classes during the day and on Tuesday and Thursday in the evenings, he went to Quidditch practice, which was rough, but he learned a lot from the rest of the team. During Defense class, Harry's scar didn't hurt him, like it did during the first class.

Finally Friday came around. While he was eating breakfast in between Draco and Zabini, he heard the post come in. Looking up, he saw tons of owls flying in giving mail to the other students. An owl landed near Zabini and gave him the Daily Prophet, as well as a letter from his mum.

“Can I look at this?” asked Harry, as he held up the newspaper. Harry saw Zabini nod, and he unrolled it, looking at the front page. It read

Gringotts Vault Burglarized, Stealers Unknown

“Look at this,” said Harry to Draco. Draco leaned in closer and Harry continued, “Gringotts Vault 713 has been found burglarized. Goblins at Gringotts say that someone just over two weeks ago has been to Vault 713. As to who or what has been stolen has not been found out.”

“Odd. I didn't think anyone could steal from Gringotts, its too protected,” said Draco. Harry handed the paper back to Blaise with thanks and then turned back to Draco.

“You might find that odd, but what I find odd is that I was at Vault 713 with Hagrid before I came to Hogwarts. He said that what he took was ‘Hogwarts business.’”

“Maybe what he took is here at Hogwarts.”

“You think?”

“I’m not sure, but he said it was ‘Hogwarts business.’ And what better place to keep Hogwarts-related things, than at Hogwarts,” said Draco.

“I see your point,” said Harry. He looked across the Great Hall and saw Ron, Hermione, and Neville looking at the Daily Prophet, as well. He knew he’d have to write to them when he got the chance.

Harry still got glares from Snape, so Harry was happy when double Potions had ended, so that he could go to lunch, and then have that much wanted talk with Hagrid.

As he walked over to Hagrid’s small house by the Forbidden Forest, he had a huge smile on his face. Harry was so happy to be able to have a conversation with Hagrid. He knocked on the door, but no one answered, but he could hear a dog barking in the background. *Where’s Hagrid? Maybe he’s behind his house?*

Harry walked around the side, and saw Hagrid putting seeds in the ground. “Hiya, Hagrid,” said Harry. “What are you planting?”

“Oi, Harry! I have missed yeh! Feels like I haven’t seen yeh in a year.” He came over and gave Harry a massive hug. He was squeezed tightly in Hagrid’s arms. He finally let go of Harry, and he could breathe again. “O’ righ’. I’m plantin’ pumpkin seeds. For Halloween, yeh know. Let me take off me gloves and I’ll make yeh a cup o’ tea.” They walked through the back door into Hagrid’s little house.

Harry liked it inside. It was crowded because of large objects, but it was still warm and inviting. Harry took a seat on a huge chair with patches stitched into it.

Hagrid began to make tea for the two of them and put out some biscuits. “Harry, how has school been for yeh?”

“I guess, it’s been alright. The classes aren’t that bad. Tons of homework, though,” said Harry.

"Well, then what's been the problem? Yeh said yeh had somethin' on yer mind." Just then the teapot whistled and Hagrid got up from his chair. He brought over two cups of tea.

"Thanks. The teachers are the problem, well...only one teacher. Snape."

"Snape? What about Snape?"

"He keeps giving me dirty looks, like I did something wrong. I'm not making this up, Hagrid!" Harry saw the skeptical look in Hagrid's face. "Really!"

"He would have no reason fer hating yeh, Harry."

"Actually, yes he would. I talked to Dumbledore last Friday; he just gave me a bunch of riddles. But I actually solved it."

"What did Dumbledore say?"

"He said that Snape and my father were in the same year here at Hogwarts, and then he mentioned how much I looked like my father."

"They were in the same year here. And yeh do look a lot like yer father. What's there ter figure out, Harry?"

"I need to figure out why Snape hates me. And I couple nights ago it came to me. It finally connected. Snape hated my father, and because I look so much like my father, I remind Snape of him, so he hates me."

"Blimey, Harry. Snape doesn' hate yeh."

"You don't honestly believe that, Hagrid, do you? I know that Snape hates me, and you don't have to believe me. The thing I don't know is why he hated my father. I asked Dumbledore, but he said it wasn't his story to tell."

"I don' know, Harry. Jus' don' go mentionin' that yeh think Snape hates yeh teh others. That's not a good idea, especially since yer in Slytherin. Don' make yer school years harder than it has teh be."

"I wasn't planning on mentioning that to anyone, especially not another Slytherin. I don't want any enemies," said Harry.

"I know yeh don', Harry." Hagrid sipped his tea.

"Hey, Hagrid, did you hear about what happened on Saturday?" asked Harry. He wanted to find out who the teachers thought it was that was in that third floor corridor room.

"Yeah. Professor McGonagall told me that two or more students broke in somewhere," said Hagrid. *Bugger. I thought that Hagrid would give more information.*

"What's in that room, anyway?" asked Harry, hoping he sounded innocent.

"There's... Blimey! How did yeh know there was a room there?"

Stupid! Stupid! "You mentioned there was," said Harry, trying to look calm.

"No I didn', Harry," said Hagrid, his voice getting strict.

"Okay. I already knew about the room."

"You know abou' Fluffy?" asked Hagrid.

"Fluffy? That's monsters name is Fluffy? It doesn't look fluffy to me!" said Harry, incredulously.

"Fluffy is not a mon...Wait? How did yeh know abou' Fluffy?" asked Hagrid.

"Promise you won't tell Snape or any other teacher?"

"Harry, how do yeh know!" Hagrid's face was a bit red.

"Okay, okay! Well... I was one of the students on Saturday that broke into the room."

"Harry! You've only been 'ere two weeks! And yeh already causin' trouble!"

"We didn't plan on going into that room. We were just looking for a room to hang out in."

"You and who?" asked Hagrid.

"Another." asked Harry, quieter.

"Who's the other, Harry!"

"Draco Malfoy," said Harry. He said the name almost in a whisper.

"Draco Malfoy! Yeh were walkin' around the school at night with Draco Malfoy? Yeh shouldn' be hangin' around with a Malfoy. Do you know who the Malfoy's are?"

"No. Not really," said Harry. "But Draco's my friend, Hagrid. He may be arrogant at times, but he's not bad." He knew that what Hagrid was going to say was definitely something bad because Hagrid leaned in a little closer as if there might be someone listening.

"Draco is probably not a bad wizard yet, but he will be. His father will turn him or, most likely, already has. They're bad wizards, Harry. His father was a Death Eater."

"What's a Death Eater?" asked Harry.

"Death Eater's are Yeh Know Who's followers. Horrible people, Harry."

"Voldemort?" Hagrid cringed at the name. "Oh, sorry. Dumbledore told me not to be afraid of that name."

"Well, I'd be careful around Malfoy, if I were yeh, Harry. Be careful who yeh trust," said Hagrid.

"Well, who can I trust? Who else has parents that were Death Eaters?" asked Harry, nervous now at Hagrid's words.

"No one knows who all the Death Eaters are. That's why yeh ter be careful." Harry knew he was really emphasizing this point.

“Well, then I’m glad I made other friends from Gryffindor. Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger,” said Harry.

“O’ yeh made good friends from Gryffindor. Weasley’s are people yeh can trust. Yeh can definitely trust Gryffindors, Harry. Yer parents were in Gryffindor,” said Hagrid, with a cheerful tone in his voice.

“Yeah I know. Dumbledore told me,” said Harry. “Oh! I want to tell you something. In Defense Against the Dark Arts class last week, my scar hurt me. I mean, it could have been nothing, but it’s just my scar has never hurt before,” said Harry.

“It might have been nothin’, Harry. But I’ll talk ter Dumbledore fer yeh, if you want,” said Hagrid.

“I already have,” said Harry.

“O’ that’s good. Dumbledore will probably know.”

“Hagrid, did you see the Daily Prophet this morning?” asked Harry. /p

“Yeah,” said Hagrid. “It was for Dumbledore that I took the...”

“The what?”

“Nothing. Something that doesn’ concern yeh, that’s what it is.”

“Why is this *thing* so important?” asked Harry, trying to get more information out of Hagrid.

“The Sorcerer’s Stone is impor... I should not have told you that,” said Hagrid, upset at himself.

“The Sorcerer’s Stone? Is that what the thing was that you took? What’s the Sorcerer’s Stone, Hagrid?” asked Harry, very quickly.

“Nothing,” said Hagrid still mad at what he had said. “I should get back ter tending ter me pumpkins. Go enjoy the rest of yer free day. And try not ter get into too much trouble, Harry.”

“Only for you, Hagrid,” said Harry, sarcastically.

"I mean it, Harry," said Hagrid.

"I know. And I will. Don't worry. Bye, Hagrid." Harry got up and saw Hagrid's dog asleep.

"Bye, Harry." As Harry went through the front door, he could have sworn he heard Hagrid say, "But I do worry." *I know you do, Hagrid, and that's why you're a good person, but now I have something to I need to tell Draco, Ron, and Hermione.*

A/N: Maybe Harry's instinct to choose Draco Malfoy, as a friend wasn't so good of an idea. Hmmm? Then why did he defend him? You can think on that, while waiting for the next chapter. And Harry found out about the Sorcerer's Stone. What will happen next? Review!

“Freedom is not merely the opportunity to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them—and then, the opportunity to choose.” -C. Wright Mills

x

Competition

Harry went back to the Common Room because he knew that no one would be there, since everyone else was in class. *I like having time to myself. Maybe others don't, but I need time to be alone.* Harry lay down on a couch by the fire. He stared at the stone ceiling, and exhaled loudly. He closed his eyes; trying to think of something he could do with the time he had.

I could... do nothing. Just lay here until people show up. Oh, I know! I haven't written Ron and Hermione in a week. I'll do that, and then...practice Quidditch! Harry opened his eyes and went to the dormitory to get his box of parchment.

Once he was at his bed, quill in hand, he began to write.

Humorous & Cleverly

I just wanted to catch up with you mates. Tell me what you think about the last letter sent about my father and that professor. Plus, I also have something else to tell you, as well. Draco and I were exploring the school on Saturday night. We were the ones that screamed and awoke Filch. We broke into a room that was in the forbidden third floor corridor. But we didn't mean to. I was just trying to prove to him that I could find a better room than his, but anyway, we came across the room. And in the room was another door, so we decided to see what was through that door, so when we opened it we saw a three-headed dog in the room. We screamed and ran out. But I think I remember seeing a lock on the floor. Tell me what you two think. Also today at breakfast I saw you two looking at the Daily Prophet, so I'm guessing you've seen the article about vault 713 that was burglarized. Well, before Hagrid took me to Hogwarts, he first took me to Gringotts and I remember him taking something out of that

vault. Today I went to see Hagrid and he mentioned, regrettably I might add, that what he took was something called the Sorcerer's Stone. Have you ever heard of it? When he was taking the stone from the vault, he had said it was "Hogwarts business." I haven't told Draco about the stone yet, but we talked over the fact that Hagrid had taken something and he had guessed that whatever Hagrid had taken is here at Hogwarts. Do you think that the stone could be here at Hogwarts?

Courageous

PS-Hagrid told me the three-headed dog's name is Fluffy. If you think that's odd, then you're right. You didn't see it, but it was definitely not fluffy.

Harry finished writing, but knew that he couldn't send the letter now because they were in class. He would have to do it later. He put the letter in his robes. Harry opened his trunk and grabbed his Nimbus 2000. On Monday morning, while others were receiving the Daily Prophet, he had gotten it.

He knew that there would be no Quidditch teams on the field, so he went to there as fast as possible. He wanted to be able to spend as much time as he could practicing before class ended and other students started walking around. And by the time class ended for dinner, Harry would be starving from the exercise.

When Harry got to the field he saw that he wasn't alone. He saw that the Gryffindor Seeker, who was a third year, was on the field, already flying around. Harry didn't know his name, but he had the Golden Snitch out and was trying to catch it. *Maybe I should leave. But I did want to practice. I could ask him to give me some time with the Snitch. Yeah, I'll do that.*

Harry got on his broom and went up to where the other Seeker was. "Hey!" Harry yelled. Harry's hair flew up when the Gryffindor Seeker flew swiftly over. Harry saw that he had short blond hair. "Could I get some time with the Snitch? I was hoping I could get some practice before dinner," said Harry.

"I got a better idea. Do you want to compete for the Snitch? We'll let it go and then try to beat each other to find it. Every time you or I catch it, it'll be 10 points. Whoever catches it the most times before the bell rings for dinner, wins," said the Seeker.

"Yeah, alright," said Harry, who was now full of adrenaline now, ready for the chase.

"Okay. I'll let it go. One... two... three..." He let go of the Snitch and they saw it fly away. "Wait a minute so that we don't know where it is. Ready?"

"Always," said Harry. They both flew off in different directions, trying to find the Snitch. After about ten minutes of flying around, Harry saw it. He looked to see if the Gryffindor had spotted it, too, but he hadn't. Harry flew swiftly to the Snitch, and after chasing it for a while he finally caught it. "I got it!" Harry had a huge smile on his face.

The other Seeker turned around, his face covered in a look of amazement. "Bloody hell! How did you...? I didn't even hear you fly around!" said the Gryffindor Seeker.

"I got 10 points. Want to go again?" asked Harry, very pleased with himself.

"Of course! The bell hasn't rung yet. This time lets wait a little longer to go chasing after it," said the Seeker. He wasn't very thrilled that Harry, a first year, had beaten him to getting the Snitch.

"Fine. One... two... three..." They again watched it fly away.

"We can go now," said the Seeker, after two minutes. It took a long time for Harry to spot the Snitch, but this time the Gryffindor Seeker was too quick for him. They were both reaching for it, but the other seeker had longer arms, so he got it. "Yes! Ten points for me, too."

They kept going for an hour until they both had 50 points. In ten minutes the bell would ring ending the last class of the day. But Harry and the other seeker were still searching for the Snitch. Eventually they both heard the bell ring. "Lets keep going. The last catch will be worth 20 points," said Harry.

“Brilliant idea!” said the Seeker. Harry and the Gryffindor Seeker didn’t know this, but people saw them and were now watching on the ground. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw the Snitch, but the other Seeker saw it, too. They both raced for it, pushing each other out of the way, and each reaching one hand for it. They both were equally away from the Snitch, but then the Snitch went directly downward. Harry dove for it, the Gryffindor didn’t. He maneuvered his broom downward, grabbed it, and then turned his broom back horizontally before hitting the ground.

Harry heard students on the ground cheering for him. Harry heard someone much like Zabini yelling, “Go Harry!” Harry heard the Gryffindor come up to him. He held out his hand.

“Good game. We should do it again. My name’s Ackley Leven,” said the Seeker.

“Yeah, it was fun. My name’s Harry Potter.”

“Oh, Blimey! I didn’t realize I was playing against someone famous. Nice to meet you,” said Leven. They shook hands, and Harry liked the fact that he didn’t look up at his scar, like so many others have done.

“Nice to meet you, too. Well, see you on the field,” said Harry, cheerfully. He brought his broom down to the ground. He wiped the sweat from his forehead, and realized he still had the Snitch in his left hand. He returned it to the trunk that held all the other Quidditch balls, before walking over to Draco and Zabini. He saw some other Slytherins behind them talking.

“I saw you catch the Snitch, Harry. You really are amazing at Quidditch,” said Zabini.

“Thanks. Were you watching the whole time?” asked Harry.

“Not the whole time, but we came around the corner and saw you and the Gryffindor flying around. I like the part when you dove for the Snitch,” said Draco, impressed, but he tried not to show it.

“Yeah, me too!” said Zabini. They started walking back toward the castle and towards the Slytherin Common Room. But then Harry remembered he wanted to send the letter for Hermione and Ron.

“Oh, I forgot. I wanted to send a letter to someone. I’ll meet you two in the Great Hall,” said Harry, running off to the Owlry, broom in hand.

Harry got to the Owlry out of breath and even more sweaty than he already was. He sent the letter off with Hedwig, and then he ran back downstairs to his dormitory to change. Harry knew that he probably smelled really bad, so he decided to take a quick shower, and then headed to the Great Hall before he starved.

“Where did you go? Home and back?” asked Draco, sarcastically as he ate his mashed potatoes.

“What are you talking about?” asked Harry, pouring anything close to him into his cup.

“You took a long time to send a letter, that’s all,” said Draco.

“Oh, because I didn’t just send a letter. I took a shower because I smelled really bad. Problem?” Harry asked, turning to give him a look.

“No. Just wondering,” said Draco, who turned to look at his food.

“Good because I want to talk to you.”

“About?”

“What we talked about this morning at breakfast,” said Harry. Harry saw Draco give him a confused look, so he lowered his voice and said, “Hagrid. The vault. Mysterious object.”

“Yeah? What about it?” asked Draco, his mouth full.

“Well, this afternoon since I had no classes, I went to talk to Hagrid, and he told me what the object was,” said Harry. He grabbed for some food.

“He just came out and told you what the object was?” asked Draco, incredulously.

“Well, no. He kind of said it without realizing, and regretted it afterwards.”

“Oh. Well, what did he say the object was?”

“The Sorcerer’s Stone,” said Harry, in a whisper.

“The Sorcerer’s Stone!” said Draco. He hadn’t said it in a whisper, but he hadn’t shouted it either, but when Harry turned to look at the High Table, he found one of the teachers giving him a look: Snape.

“Will you be quiet?” said Harry, in a whisper turning back to Draco. “No one can know that we know about the stone.”

“Okay,” said Draco. “But do you know what the Sorcerer’s Stone is?”

“No, but I didn’t know you knew,” said Harry.

“Yeah, I know what it is. I heard my father talking about it once, but that was years ago. Anyway, this stone can make anyone immortal.”

“Immortal?” asked Harry, curiously.

“Yeah,” said Draco, as he nodded.

“Why was your father talking about the stone?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t hear the whole conversation. But mind you, I was about seven,” said Draco.

“Well, do you remember who your father was talking to?”

“I never saw his face because I was listening from the other room, but later my father just told me he was an ‘old friend,’” said Draco.

“Oh. Earlier you thought that the object Hagrid had taken was here at Hogwarts. Do you think that the stone could be here?”

"It could. Hogwarts is very protected," said Draco, speaking at a normal tone again.

"Protected?"

"Well, yeah. There are all kinds of spells on the school to protect it," said Draco.

"Protect it from what?"

"More like who. Protect it from people of other schools trying to get in, and from Muggles."

"From Muggles. Why would you need to protect Hogwarts from Muggles? They are just Muggles, after all," said Harry.

"Okay. Maybe not protect it *from* Muggles, but to make sure they don't get in. I heard that when a muggle sees Hogwarts it looks like ruins or something of that sort."

"I never knew that," said Harry, as he turned to his food once more.

Harry returned to the Common Room with Draco. After some time, he saw Hedwig come over to him carrying a letter.

A/N: I know that Harry is amazing at Quidditch and he should have caught the Snitch every time, but I decided to let the Leven get a chance. Besides, Harry is only a first year he'll get better. REVIEW!
Sara

“The pain of the mind is worse than the pain of the body.”

-Syrus

xi

The Beginning of Loneliness

“Hiya, Hedwig.” Harry took the letter, and walked over to an empty spot in the Common Room, so that he could read it.

Courageous,

Humorous and I think that there is a possibility that you could be right, but the question is: Why did Snape hate your father? I’m sure you’ve already thought that. And how could you, Courageous! Go out in the middle of the night! Do you know how much trouble you would have gotten into if you were caught? You could have been expelled! Do you really want to be kicked out Hogwarts? Humorous and I know that you don’t want to. So, please be careful. Anyway, you saw a three-headed dog named Fluffy? And you saw a lock on the floor? So there must be a trapdoor. That lock and dog must be guarding something. Humorous agrees with me about this. A while ago, I looked through a book at the Library, and at seeing your letter, I went back to look over it yesterday before replying. The book said that the Sorcerer’s Stone is an elixir of life, meaning that it would make you live forever. The creator of the Sorcerer’s Stone is Nicholas Flamel. And since Hagrid took it for Hogwarts business and not for some other business, then its possible that it is here at Hogwarts. Where it is in the castle, would be a good question now.

Cleverly & Humorous

PS-Be careful what you tell Malfoy. I know he’s your friend, but... Just be careful.

Harry folded the parchment back up and put it in his pocket away from prying eyes. He turned around and headed for the dormitory, to write back to Hermione and Ron. *Well, I’m glad that what Draco told me about the Sorcerer’s Stone matches to what Hermione and Ron*

told me. When Harry went into the dormitory he saw Zabini already down there, reading a book.

“Hiya, Zabini,” said Harry, as he headed for his bed. Zabini’s bed was next to his. Harry went to the table beside his bed, opened the box, and took out some parchment.

“You can call me Blaise, Harry.” He was looking at Harry as he sat cross-legged on his bed with a smile on his face. Harry saw Blaise’s shoes on the floor.

“Okay,” said Harry, with a small smile back.

“Okay. Good. If we’re going to be living in the same dormitory for seven years, then we might as well call each other by our first names,” said Blaise. He turned back to his book.

Harry decided to write the letter a little later. He pulled himself onto his bed with his feet hanging over the side facing Blaise. “Blaise, were your parents in Slytherin?” Harry placed his parchment beside him.

“Yeah, why?” asked Blaise, now looking up from his book.

“No reason. Just wondering,” said Harry. He shrugged his shoulders pretending it was nothing.

“Were your parents in Slytherin?” asked Blaise, putting his book upside down open on his bed in front of him.

Should I tell him that they weren’t? Well, its not that big a deal, right? He paused for a second. “No, they were in Gryffindor,” said Harry.

“Oh. Someone told me that a child being put into a House different than the rest of the family doesn’t happen very often, but I guess it must happen every so often, right?” said Blaise.

“Yeah,” muttered Harry, looking down at the Blaise’s shoes. He looked up and saw that Blaise had a look upon his face that showed that he was regretting ever saying anything. “Don’t worry, Blaise.”

"No. I shouldn't have said anything. I'm sorry," mumbled Blaise.

"It's fine. Don't worry," said Harry. He grabbed for his parchment and took the quill out of the box. He heard Blaise turn another page of his book.

Humorous & Cleverly,

I'll be more careful. I promise. And you're right; I definitely don't want to be expelled from Hogwarts. That would be the worst thing that could ever happen to me. That would mean that I would have to go back to the Dursley's house. They hate me a lot, although that's an understatement. I don't know who hates me more Snape or the...

Just then, the dormitory door swung open, and Draco came in. Both Harry and Blaise looked up from what they were doing. "Why are two down here? Everybody else is upstairs," said Draco, as he walked over to Harry's bed. "What are you reading, Zabini?"

"Oh.... *The Small Town Near a Drowning River by Evelyn Flumen*. It's a murder mystery," said Blaise, showing Draco the cover of the book.

"Hmmm... dead interesting," mumbled Draco, sarcastically. Harry saw Draco walking over to him and he quickly put the parchment under his pillow. He didn't want Draco to see what he was writing. "Harry, whom are you always writing to?" asked Draco. *Cor! He saw the parchment.*

"No one. Just a friend," Harry muttered.

"What's your friend's name?" asked Draco, curiously.

"Why would I tell you? It's none of your business," Harry hissed at Draco.

"Fine. Just curious," Draco blurted. Harry noticed Draco go to his side table and grab a letter.

Harry quickly glanced at Blaise. Blaise was giving him a "what's wrong with Draco?" look. "Besides, I have a letter of my own to send,"

said Draco, slightly sticking his nose up as he walked. It was only after Draco went through the doorway that Harry took out the unfinished letter again.

...the Dursley's. Anyway, there is probably a trapdoor, although I don't remember. I was too busy screaming and running for my life to check so closely. But if there's a lock on the floor then there must be a trapdoor. I just wonder what is under the trapdoor. What has to be guarded? And I also have no idea why Snape hated my father. Your friend,

Courageous

Harry folded the parchment and got up, heading for the door. "Where are you going?" asked Blaise, innocently. His book still in his lap, his fingers still holding the book open.

"Just to send the letter," said Harry. He put the folded letter and put in a pocket of his robes.

"Alright. See you," said Blaise, turning back to his book.

Harry walked up to the Common Room and slipped away unknowingly, save for Blaise. Harry slowly walked up to the Owlry. Each step to him seemed to take forever. Almost the whole way was spent staring down at the floor.

Harry finally made it to the Owlry and sent off the letter with Hedwig. He stood standing at the large open window, watching as Hedwig flew away, but continued to stare even after she had disappeared from sight. Harry eventually decided to move because it would be better than standing there all night. Although he would have.

Harry began walking again, but even more slowly than before. Harry just supposed he was in walking state of mind. He didn't want to be in the dormitory or the Common or the Owlry or back at the Dursley's. He looked at his watch, it was almost dark, and he would have to go back to the Common Room. But Harry didn't feel like being around people. Harry stopped short. For some reason he just got a deep down feeling of emptiness; a feeling that he didn't belong anywhere. He didn't know where that feeling suddenly came from.

I think I'll go searching for that room where Ron, Hermione, and I to talk in. No one will probably even notice I'm gone. Maybe Dumbledore's right; I should have been a Gryffindor. Maybe there I would have had real friends, although Blaise is my friend and I guess Draco is my friend. But why do I feel like I have nowhere to go? Nowhere I belong?

After walking around, dodging professors when he had to, Harry eventually found himself near Dumbledore's office. *Is Dumbledore busy? Right now he's the only person I could talk to. No maybe later. Walking seems better.*

Harry decided to keep walking. After moving around some floors and up some stairs, he eventually found himself on the second floor. Harry almost hit his head on a large wooden door because he had had his head down. Harry opened the door to find a completely empty room. There was a lot of dust, Harry noticed, but he was lost in too much thought to notice what was on the other side of the room. Harry found a couple old chairs and came to the conclusion that it was finally time to sit.

He put the chair against the wall and wiped away the layers of dust. Realizing there was now dust all over his sleeve he instinctually wiped his sleeve on the bottom of his cloak. Harry sat down, his head resting against the wall. *Maybe I could start my own House: The Harry Potter House. Only for me. Yeah, I rather like that idea. Too bloody bad that couldn't actually happen.*

Sitting there, he exhaled loudly and closed his eyes. His eyes fought against him, so he opened his them and stared at the ceiling. *Well, there's nothing interesting in this room, I might as well continue.*

Harry picked up his head and saw on the other side of the room, the only thing not covered in layers of dust, was a beautiful mirror.

A/N: Keep in mind, they are eleven years old, and things just don't click as easily as they do when you get older. So, when Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Draco can't figure out where the stone is hidden and what is hidden under Fluffy, just remember that

“Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul.”

-Henry Van Dyke, *The Prison and the Angel*

xii

The Mirror

Once Harry saw the mirror, he couldn't stop himself from getting up and walking toward it. He wanted to get a better look at it. Once he was in front of it, he realized that it was about eight feet tall. Carved into the wood at the top of the mirror was: “res ipsa loquitur.” Harry didn't know what it meant, but looked into the mirror shocked at what he was seeing.

Harry looked into the immense mirror with shock. Staring back at him were his parents, but they weren't clear. Their faces and bodies were blurred. He could also see another person who was blurred. Harry realized it was an older him. His older self looked to be a young adult. But when Harry saw his parents in the mirror, he didn't see himself, and vice versa. All blurred and unclear. Harry was excited to see his parents. He saw that they were very pleased to see him. There were almost tears in his mother's blurred eyes. His father was smiling at him with pure joy on his face.

But then the image changed. He saw himself older with a smirk on his face. For some reason, Harry got the impression that the image he was seeing was powerful and could easily control others. Harry almost wanted to kneel to his older self, but he resisted the urge. He looked at his older self closely. Harry saw that his hair was longer; he had broad shoulders and stood tall. Harry looked and saw a spark in his eyes which spoke: powerful.

What is this mirror? Why am I seeing my parents and an older me in the same mirror? Why are they blurred? I want to see my parents, not me.

Harry took a step back thinking that maybe that would change the image, but nothing happened. Harry continued to look at the mirror until once again his parents were standing behind him. Harry began to smile, happy that he could see them again. Harry's dad put his

hand on Harry's shoulder and he didn't resist, even when he, surprisingly, could feel it.

After looking into the mirror for so long, Harry decided to checked his watch. It was 3:12 in the morning. Harry realized that he had been standing in front of the mirror for hours. And when he began walking again, he almost collapsed on his way back to the Common Room. *I should get to sleep. Or I'll be falling asleep in the middle of the day.*

Harry took off his shoes, changed into his pajamas, and crawled into bed. It took some time for Harry to fall asleep. For he was still thinking about the mirror that he had found. Harry eventually fell asleep wishing his parents were still alive, and wondering why he saw himself in the mirror.

For the next two weeks, Harry would, every chance he could, go to the mirror to just stand and occasionally sit in front of the mirror. He liked being able to see his parents because he doesn't have any memories of them and no pictures. Harry was told countless times that he looks remarkably like his father and has his mother's green eyes. But that has never helped Harry with him wanting to remember them. He wants to talk to his parents, learn from them, know their habits, know the good things about them, and the bad things about them.

But its just a mirror, and the image is always changing to his older self. For however long Harry was looking at his parents, he has to spend the same time looking at his older self. Harry's older self was constantly looking at him and shaking his head as if he's saying, "You don't understand... not yet." Then the older self always smirks at him.

Harry always feels like he has to look away, but can't. His older self always intrigues him. *Is this what I'm going to look like? Does this mirror show people the future? No, of course not. My parents are being shown in the mirror. And they are... dead.*

Harry looked back to the mirror sadly, but the frown faded as he once again saw his parents smiling at him again.

It was yet another night, that Harry was waiting in the Slytherin Common Room for everyone to leave, so that he could go to the

mirror. Draco was the last person in the Common Room with Harry. Harry was at a table finishing some homework, when Draco got up carrying a couple books, "Alright. I'm going to sleep. My eyes are pretty much burning inside my head. I've noticed that you've been coming to the dormitories really late. You shouldn't work so hard."

Harry was looking at Draco almost incredulously. He knew that Draco knew he wasn't working; it was just Draco didn't know what he was doing late at night. And it was, most likely, killing him that he didn't know.

"Err... yeah. I'll try to go to sleep earlier for now on," said Harry, as he picked up his quill that he had placed upon his book, hoping that Draco would think that he really was working. Harry heard Draco leave and heard him go down. He waited a couple minutes, as he usually did, until he was certain that no one would know he was leaving. Harry closed his books and put his quill and ink in his bag. He put the bag in a corner, and walked to the stone door. Harry put his hand on the stone and walked silently until he got to the room with the mirror.

Harry decided that he was going to take Draco's advice and try not to stay in the room too long because he did need sleep. He seemed to be getting less and less sleep. The mirror seemed to be drawing him toward it. He couldn't get away from it; he always wanted to be looking into it. Whether he was seeing his parents or himself. Harry had to force himself to leave after staying there for an hour.

As Harry was opening the door to go into the corridor, he slammed the door into something hard. "Wha...?" whispered Harry, confused. He quickly slid through the door opening to find Draco on the floor rubbing his head.

"Ow. What were you trying to do to me?" said Draco, quietly. He got up facing Harry, moving toward the door.

Harry blocked the door. "I didn't know you were there. Why are you following me?"

"What's in there?" asked Draco, putting his hand on the door trying to pull it open, but Harry was standing in front of it.

“Nothing.” Harry closed the door to prevent Draco from looking in, but still stood in front of it.

“Then why are you guarding it? Is this why you have been coming to the dormitory late every night for the past two weeks? Come on, what’s in there?” asked Draco, folding his arms.

“Nothing! I go in there to think. There’s nothing in there,” Harry, trying to sound believable. He lowered his voice, he didn’t want to be heard by Filch or a professor.

Harry saw Draco narrow his eyes at him, disbelievingly. “Fine,” said Draco, as he began walking away. He turned back to Harry. “I’ll leave, you said you like being *alone* anyway.”

Harry stood there, but then followed Draco. They walked down a couple corridors without saying a word to each other, checking around each corner to make sure that no one was there before moving on. Draco walked slightly in front him, and while quickly glancing at him, Harry saw that he had a letter sticking out of his cloak pocket.

His curiosity got the better of him and he grabbed the letter out of Draco’s pocket. Harry knew that Draco had felt him pull out the parchment and he turned quickly to Harry, instinctively moving his hand to his pocket.

“What’s this?” asked Harry, as he skimmed over the letters on the folded parchment. It read: *Draco Malfoy, Hogwarts*. It was in handwriting much like Draco’s except it had more elegance to it, like an adult had written it.

Draco grabbed it out of his hands, his face screwed up with anger. “Don’t touch my stuff, Harry!” yelled Draco. Stunned the Draco had been so offended by such a harmless act, Harry just stood there watching as Draco walked hurriedly away. After realizing that Draco had spoken too loudly, Harry looked around him and quietly but quickly ran to the Dungeons.

“Awakening,” whispered Harry, out of breath as he looked nervously behind him. The stone door appeared and he entered the Common Room.

A/N: I hope you like this chapter! I know I do! Review please...

PS—If Draco were to be an Animagus, do you think he would be a FOX or a RAVEN? Please tell me in your review!

Preview of Chapter 13-Too Much Talk:

Harry has to get through writing letters, classes, and then talking to Hermione, Dumbledore, Ron, and Draco. When will this day end? But Harry has a very interesting conversation with Draco about power, Draco’s father, and dark magic...

“We have learned that power is a positive force, if it is used for positive purposes.”

-Elizabeth Dole

xiii

Too much Talk

Harry awoke on a Monday to something digging its claws into his stomach. “Ouch!” Harry sat up suddenly, instinctively pushed whatever that was on him off. He saw that Hedwig was near the edge of his bed.

“Oh, sorry, Hedwig. But next time you need to wake me you can just hoot.” Harry grabbed his glasses with one hand while was rubbing his stomach with the other, and looked at his t-shirt to see that there were some holes in it. *Oh, bloody hell.* Hedwig came up to him, raising her foot to Harry. He took off the letter, but looked around the room before reading it.

Every one was still asleep in their beds. Harry yawned and looked at his watch to see that it was 7:06. Because everyone was asleep, the letter seemed safe to open and read without others questioning him.

Courageous,

You haven't sent any letters in two weeks, so Humorous and I were just wondering if everything's okay. I've been going to the Library a lot to see if I could find anything that has been guarded here at Hogwarts, but came up with nothing. I'll see what else I can do. We just want to know if you're doing okay, because we saw you in a couple classes looking very grim. If there's anything on your mind, you can let us know. For now,

Cleverly & Humorous

Harry took out some parchment and began writing his return letter. He yawned again.

Humorous & Cleverly,

I'm doing okay. I just have a lot of things on my mind. If you can't find anything, it's all right. Remember how we wanted a place where we could talk? Well, I was thinking that maybe we could meet at Hagrid's. We won't have to do any sneaking around the castle, which I'm sure you appreciate, cleverly. It would be a lot easier and a lot more comfortable, as well. I have something else that I don't think I told you. It's been happening every so often, and so far only in Defense Against the Dark Arts class, but my scar keeps stinging. My scar never hurt me before I came to Hogwarts. I can't figure out why it's been happening. I told Dumbledore a while back, but he didn't know either. That's probably why I've been looking so "grim." That's what's been on my mind,

Courageous

Harry looked it over, nodded to himself, and sent it away with Hedwig. Harry got out of bed and searched for a new shirt to put on. He grabbed the books for that day's classes and his bag because he knew he would have to get up soon anyway. Harry quietly slipped out of the dormitory and made his way past the engravings of snakes to the Common Room. He didn't know if there would be food in the Great Hall yet, but decided to check anyway. Harry seemed to have woken up hungry.

Dragging his bag, as well as his feet, Harry went to the Great Hall, and was pleased to see that there was food this early in the morning. While he made his way to the Slytherin table, Harry saw a girl sitting at the Hufflepuff table eating some scrambled eggs. He looked toward the High Table and saw Dumbledore reading the Daily Prophet.

Harry put his bag on the floor and sat down, instantly grabbing various foods that would keep him going throughout the day. After a while of stuffing his face, he heard someone stomping toward the Great Hall. Eventually he saw Hermione enter and sit at the Gryffindor table, her back to him.

Just then Hedwig came in carrying yet another letter. After taking off the letter, he gave some bread to Hedwig and saw that the handwriting was big and unorganized.

Courageous,

Its just me, Humorous, answering because Cleverly thinks she knows everything. While I have to admit her knowledge is pretty close to everything, she still doesn't have to brag about what she knows! She just stormed off and didn't have a chance to read what you wrote. I guess I'll have to tell her later, unfortunately. Sorry your scar has been hurting you. In Defense class I'll watch out for anything suspicious that could be causing your scar to sting. I'll tell Cleverly to look out, too. I like the idea of going to Hagrid's. I haven't been in his house, but it seems like it would be really cozy in there. I thought you were going to be looking for a room for us? I mean, its fine you haven't found one, but it would be better for the three of us to talk. I was thinking that maybe you and me could go looking around one night. We can arrange this later. Best not tell Cleverly though,

Humorous

Harry turned to his bag and pulled out some parchment and a quill and wrote back to Ron.

Humorous,

Sorry you had a fight with Cleverly. And she does seem to know a lot though I don't spend as much time with her as you do. I wish I spent more time with you two. I really like the idea of you and me exploring the school. With another pair of eyes, it'll be easier to find a room. And two more eyes looking out for me in Defense class would be great, too! I really have no idea why my scar has been hurting. Oh, and sorry I didn't find the room on my own, I've just been very busy with schoolwork. As I'm sure you have been, as well. And I won't tell Cleverly. See you in class,

Courageous

Harry tied the letter to Hedwig's leg and she flew off. Hermione looked at Hedwig fly away and then turned around to look at Harry. Harry saw her eyes were a red. She turned back to her plate. Harry looked to the High Table and saw Dumbledore looking at him over the top of his newspaper. He wanted to know what thoughts were lurking behind those light blue eyes. Harry quickly looked back toward

his plate very intently. He saw that the quill was still on the table, so he put it back into his bag among his books.

"Harry, if you please." Harry heard Dumbledore's voice and immediately got up and walked until he stood in front of him. "I just want you to go talk to Miss Granger. I can see her sobbing away and I must say, it's a depressing sight. Would you talk to her? People don't usually come in for another half hour."

"Yes, of course. I already know that it's about Ron. They had a fight earlier," said Harry.

"Did he send you a letter?" asked Dumbledore, looking at him over his glasses that shined in the light.

"Yeah, just now. I'll go talk to her," said Harry. He turned away to walk to the Gryffindor table. Harry sat beside Hermione. She wasn't crying anymore, but she looked incredibly sad. "Are you okay, Hermione?"

"Um... yeah," said Hermione, sadly. There was silence between them for a couple seconds before Hermione burst. "I don't understand how he can be so mean! I was just trying to explain something! He called me a know-it-all and that sometimes he hated being around me because I knew too much." She started silently crying, the tears coming down her face. Harry leaned over and gave her a hug, which she gave back.

"You do know a lot," said Harry jokingly, trying to cheer Hermione up. "But Ron was definitely wrong to say that. I'll talk to him, okay?" He now spoke more seriously.

"Alright," muttered Hermione, as she moved away from Harry. She wiped away her tears with her sleeve. "I'm going to go wash my face. I'll see you in class. Thanks, Harry, it means a lot." Harry watched her walk out of the Great Hall. As he walked back to the Slytherin table to finish his breakfast, he noticed that Dumbledore wasn't sitting at the High Table anymore.

As the time began to near 7:40, more students as well as teachers began to come in for breakfast. After breakfast, Harry made his way to his classes. Mondays classes were always boring.

Double Transfiguration had just ended, and Harry saw that him and Ron were the only ones left in the class. Professor McGonagall was sitting at her desk writing, not paying attention to either of them.

“Ron, I need to talk to you,” said Harry in an almost whisper.

“Alright. If we’re going to discuss a time when we can go exploring, we should do it outside where Professor McGonagall can’t hear us,” whispered Ron.

“Its not about that. Its about Hermione,” muttered Harry. “This morning she was crying, Ron. Crying. And she told me what you said.”

“You talked to her in the Great Hall? Was Malfoy there?”

“Yes, I talked to her. And I wouldn’t talk to her if Draco were there, you know that. She told me what you said to her. You shouldn’t have said that. I mean, I know that you were mad, but still,” said Harry. He looked over his shoulder and Professor McGonagall was still sitting at her desk.

“Are you defending her?” said Ron, clearly offended.

“I’m just trying to tell you, that what you said was wrong. You should say sorry to her, Ron, but what you do now is up to you. I can’t force you. I’ll see you later. I hope we can still go exploring,” said Harry.

Harry started walking away from Ron, who had his head down, when Ron turned and called after him, “Yeah. We still can.”

Harry nodded and walked until he reached his dormitory. He put down his bag in his trunk and walked back up to the Common Room. He dropped onto the couch near the fire, putting his head against one of the small green pillows.

“Long day?” asked Draco, who was lying on the couch across from him. He, too, looked drained of all energy, but also looked extremely bored.

“You could say that,” said Harry. “What happened to you? You look like you just died of boredom.” Harry took off his glasses and put them on the table next to the couch.

“I think I did. I hate going to those classes,” said Draco.

“Don’t we all?” muttered Harry.

“Especially Defense Against the Dark Arts. That class is a joke, and so is Professor Quirrel. ‘T-today, c-class, we will b-be...’ doing nothing important,” said Draco jokingly. “I thought we would actually learn about the Dark Arts, like the things my father knows about.”

“What kinds of things?” asked Harry, curiously.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” asked Draco, as if to himself. “Well, actually, he wouldn’t tell me. Says I’m too young, but I know it’s none of the stupid stuff we’re learning here.”

“Well, we are only first years, you never know what we’re going to learn in the next couple years,” said Harry.

“True, but I want to learn things now, not later. Learning the good stuff in a ‘couple of years’ won’t do us any good now,” said Draco. “I want to learn the real stuff, Harry.”

Harry could just make out a smirk on Draco’s face, as he wasn’t wearing his glasses. “I don’t know about you, but I want to learn better spells than what we are taught here. My father knows those kinds of spells,” said Draco. /p

“What kind of spells do you mean?” asked Harry inquiringly. He grabbed his glasses and sat up looking at Draco, who was still laying down.

“He never really told me. Always saying I’m too young to know,” said Draco bitterly.

For some reason, Harry got the impression that the kind of spells Draco were talking about, were spells that he was sure would never be taught at Hogwarts. "Are—are they dangerous spells, Draco?"

"Perhaps."

"Then that's the reason why we wouldn't learn them," said Harry. "They're dangerous."

"I think we need to learn dangerous spells to protect ourselves."

Maybe Draco is right. If we don't learn at least some dangerous spells then we wouldn't be able to protect ourselves from those that do know them.

Draco sat up, looking at Harry. "You'd learn interesting spells if someone were to teach you, right?" asked Draco to Harry. When Harry nodded he went on. "What if those interesting spells would protect you, but give the other person pain?"

"Well, I guess, that depends on what kind of pain you are talking about. Do you mean serious physical pain that I / /I would be causing? Well... no... I don't think I could do that to someone."

"My father told me that he said the same thing when he was a first year at Hogwarts. But then, he said, things began to change for him," said Draco.

"How?" asked Harry.

"He never told me exactly what happened during his school years in detail, but he told me he started to gain power. He hasn't told me what he meant. But don't you want power, Harry? I know I do," said Draco, as he smiled to himself.

"Yeah, I guess," said Harry absent mindedly . He was now thinking back to the person he saw in the mirror. The older him that made Harry want to kneel. The thought of being able to make people do that was, surprisingly, satisfying to Harry. But Harry wasn't sure he liked thinking like that.

"You guess? Well, I know! Hey, you okay?" asked Draco.

"Yeah. I was just thinking," said Harry. He lay his back against the couch.

"You know, Harry, you think too much," said Draco.

"Yeah, I know. It's kind of hard not to. If you know what I mean," said Harry. He was surprised that he was having a real conversation with Draco. He had had one conversation like this with Draco more than two weeks ago about the Sorcerer's Stone, Fluffy, and Hogwarts. It had been a conversation that wasn't filled with competitiveness and distance. But in between then, they seemed to become very cold towards each other. Harry hoped that would now change because he rather liked being able to talk to someone without having to keep it secret. And the fact that it was someone of his own house made him feel like he belonged.

"Yeah, I know what you mean," said Draco. Harry saw him look around. There were less people than before. "Oh, people have started to leave for dinner, come on."

They both got up from the chairs because they were both starving and headed for the Great Hall.

A/N: Good chapter, yeah? No? Please REVIEW! Thanks...

"There are two tragedies in life. One is to not get your hearts desire. The other is to get it."

-George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*

14

Taken Away

Harry was exhausted. Right after waking up he had comforted Hermione, then had to get through a day of classes, and then had talked to Ron, and later to Draco. After dinner, Harry played a quiet game of Chess with Blaise. Harry wasn't thinking about anything, but his next move, when suddenly he felt like he wanted to see the mirror. He was so tired, but he wanted to see it so bad.

He had to stand in front of it; to look into its immenseness. Harry had to see his parents and he even wanted to see himself in the mirror.

Harry decided that tonight after everyone went to sleep, he would slip out. But Harry knew that Draco would follow him if he knew he was leaving. He would have to trick him somehow. It was only eight at night; Harry had time to think about it. "Queen to B4," said Harry. He watched his Queen move across the board.

The time began to near eleven pm and more and more students started leaving the Common Room. Blaise and Harry had played about half a dozen games of Chess, when Blaise said that he was going to sleep. He put the chessboard away and then turned back to Harry, "You're starting to get better. You almost beat me more than once! Well, good night." He walked to the stairs and out of view.

Harry sat in his chair and looked around at the people that were still in the Common Room. Among them, was Draco. Harry saw him talking to Crabbe and Goyle. *How can I fool him into thinking that I'm not leaving tonight? I can pretend that I fell asleep on the couch. I mean I have done it before. Then again, I might actually fall asleep.*

Harry decided that he would try it. Though he knew there was a very high possibility that he might actually fall asleep because he was so tired. He took off his glasses and lay down on the couch nearest to

the fire. Harry closed his eyes but he couldn't drift off to sleep with the subconscious pull of the mirror. Like the thought of going to the mirror was somehow keeping him awake.

"Potter fell asleep on the couch," said Crabbe, in his usual gruff-sounding tone. "Should I wake him?"

"No, just leave him. Come on," said Draco. Harry heard them all leave. He waited just in case they came back for something they had forgotten. After a couple minutes, Harry opened his eyes to an empty Common Room. Harry put his hand on the stone door and it opened.

He slipped out, slowly making his way back to the room with the mirror. Every step he took toward the room brought him relief from the day's troubles. As he stood in front of the mirror, once again, he felt relaxed from almost all thought.

Like always he stood there for hours. It was two am when he heard the floor creak behind him. Harry wanted to keep looking at the mirror, but wanted to turn around to see who was behind him. His curiosity got the better of him. He turned around to see Dumbledore.

"Professor!" Harry said, surprised. "I..."

"I know you have been coming here, Harry. And I can't allow you to come back to this mirror. I can see that it has started to attach itself to you, in a way, but I didn't think it would so quickly. I'm having the mirror moved this very night. I just hope you won't go searching for it after I have placed it somewhere else. But I will have moved it in a place you won't find it. Come," said Dumbledore, all in a calm voice.

Harry turned back to the mirror, he didn't want to leave it. "No. I want to stay. I want to stay with my parents," said Harry, sadly.

"Is that what you see, Harry, your parents?" Dumbledore said calmly, as he moved a couple steps closer to Harry.

"I see my parents...and an older me. But they're both blurred," said Harry, quietly as he faced the mirror.

“Older self? What does your older self look like, Harry?” asked Dumbledore, his voice never wavering for a single second.

“He’s older; almost an adult. He’s much stronger than I am. He has longer black hair. Its still messy, but it falls over his eyes. But when I see him, I feel like I want to...” Harry’s voice drifted into the stillness of the room.

“You want to what?” asked Dumbledore.

There was a pause before Harry spoke again. “I want to kneel to him. He’s powerful. I can feel it,” said Harry.

“You said that him and your parents were blurred? How so?” asked Dumbledore, in his usual calm. He moved even closer to Harry, his feet hardly even making a sound.

Harry seemed to be in a sort of daze as he stared at the mirror. He distantly heard Dumbledore, but felt he should answer. “I can see them, but their faces and their bodies are blurred. I can’t see either my parents or my older self clearly. And I can’t see both at the same time; I either see my parents or my older self. For however long I see my parents, is however long I see my older self,” Harry muttered.

“Harry, we must leave this mirror. I can see now, how greatly it has affected you. If you won’t leave by yourself, I will put a spell on you if I have to,” said Dumbledore, part of his calm leaving to get his point across to Harry.

Harry turned back to Dumbledore and was almost glaring at him, “You wouldn’t put a spell on me.”

“Are you so sure, Potter?” asked Dumbledore. Harry couldn’t figure out what Dumbledore’s was thinking and it made him even more frustrated. He didn’t want to leave the mirror. He wanted to stay and just keep looking into it. He turned back to it and sat down.

“I guess you leave me no choice. *“Haero!”*

Harry could feel his body freeze up. Harry could still think, see, and hear all that Dumbledore was doing and what he would do. He saw

Dumbledore move in front of him, blocking the mirror. "Sorry, Harry, but you must forget about this mirror, as hard as it may be. As you stay away from the mirror, its effects will eventually cease. I want you to see me take the mirror away to show you that it won't be here," said Dumbledore. He turned toward the corridor. "Flitwick."

Harry couldn't see Filch enter the room because he was behind him, but he could hear him. "Flitwick, I would like you to take the mirror out of the room. I think you know where I want it for the time being, until I move it again. I wish Harry to see the mirror being moved away," said Dumbledore. He moved away and Harry looked into the mirror to see his parents. They looked as happy as ever to see him. For how were they to know that the mirror they were being shown in, was being moved away from their son.

Distantly, as Harry took in the faces of his parents, he heard Flitwick utter a spell. Harry then saw the mirror being lifted off the ground, with ease, and levitated out of the room.

"I'm sorry, Harry, but you had to see the mirror being moved." With a flick of Dumbledore's wand, Harry was free to move around again. He got up and turned toward Dumbledore. "Come, let's walk."

Harry followed Dumbledore out of the room into the empty corridor. They walked a ways in silence. Harry knew that Dumbledore was trying to distance Harry from that room.

"Harry, do you know what mirror that was?" asked Dumbledore as they turned a corner.

"No," said Harry. He was still thinking of the mirror and how it had been taken away from him. They were walking slower now.

"That mirror was the Mirror of Erised. It shows someone their true desires; their deep desires. The words on the top of the mirror, 'res ipsa loquitur,' mean 'the thing speaks for itself,'" said Dumbledore.

Harry stopped walking. *I don't understand. I knew my desire was to see my parents because I've never known them, but what about the older me? Well, I do want some power, like Draco had said, but to*

make people kneel to me? I didn't know that was a deep desire of mine.

"Is there something you wish tell me about the mirror?" asked Dumbledore. *I Should I tell Dumbledore? Do I want him to know that I have a desire to have power? No, I don't want him to know that. I don't want him to think badly of me.*

"No, Professor," said Harry, as he turned to look at the floor.

"Is there anything else that has been on your mind, Harry. Since we're walking around," asked Dumbledore, casually. They had begun walking again.

"Professor, do you remember on the first Friday of school, I asked you why Snape hated me? And you said that it wasn't you're story to tell? Well, I figured out why he hates me on my own," said Harry.

"And what did you figure out?" asked Dumbledore coolly, his cloak ruffled behind him as he walked gently.

"Well, you gave me two parts of a riddle: you told me that my father and Snape were in the same year and that I looked amazingly like my father. And so it came to me before I fell asleep one night. Snape hated my father, but because I look like my father he's taking it out on me," said Harry to Dumbledore. "What I don't know is why Snape hated my father."

"Clever, very clever. I always do my best thinking before sleep, as well. But, Harry, it's still not my story to tell. There's no information I can give you. It's not my information to give. If you would like to know, then you'd have to ask Professor Snape himself. Though from what you've told me and from what I've seen, it's not likely he'd tell you so lightly," said Dumbledore, as they crossed a couple more corridors.

It didn't seem that they were going into any distinct direction. Harry noticed they weren't going in the direction of Dumbledore's office. They were just walking almost in circles. Harry wondered if Dumbledore knew this, but it's his castle, so he must have.

They turned the corner to find Snape and Quirrell talking. But they had been talking so quietly, that Harry hadn't even heard them. Harry noticed that Snape looked upset and that Quirrell looked a bit frightened. "What's going on here, Severus," asked Dumbledore, in a deeper voice than he had used previously with Harry.

"We were just talking," said Snape, stepping away from Quirrell. Harry noticed that Snape gave Quirrell a nasty look, as if telling him to stay quiet. Professor Quirrell nodded repeatedly and very nervously as he agreed with Snape.

"Potter, what are you doing out of bed?" asked Snape, just noticing him.

"He was talking to me, Severus," said Dumbledore turned to Harry. "You should be getting to sleep, Harry. Professor Quirrell will walk Harry back to the Slytherin Common Room. Severus, come with me."

"C-come on, H-Harry, we must r-run along. Its n-nearly three in th-the morning," said Professor Quirrell. They walked in silence, but since Harry knew the way better, he walked in front of Quirrell. They eventually got to the blank wall that led to the Common Room. "G-good n-night, Harry."

Professor Quirrell walked away from Harry and as he did, Harry got a searing pain in his scar. For a second, Harry couldn't even think and the pain was so unbearable that he bent over. But then it was gone. Harry looked up and saw that Quirrell was gone.

"Awakening," Harry muttered to the wall. The stone door opened and Harry walked through into an empty room. As he was making his way down to the dormitory, Harry realized what Professor Quirrell had said about it being three in the morning. He knew that he wouldn't be getting a lot of sleep.

A spell I made up. Haero: to be brought to a standstill.

A/N: I hope you liked this chapter. If you didn't like it please tell me, so that I can improve. If you liked it tell as me as well!

Preview of Chapter 15:

Harry finds out that a letter came for him, whilst he was at Quidditch practice. When he sees it, he finds that it had been opened. Draco finds out that Harry has been talking to the “the Weasley and Mudblood” through letters...

“I've always said that in politics, your enemies can't hurt you, but your friends will kill you.”

-Ann Richards

15

A Secret Between Friends

It's three weeks before Christmas and to Harry that means a week free of classes and free of schoolwork. But the weight of not being able to see the Mirror of Erised has saddened Harry for the past couple weeks. He knew that Dumbledore was trying to protect him. But at least he didn't have much time to think about it anyway.

Flint was making them practice every Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday for hours on end. Every night he came back to the Slytherin Common Room exhausted. And went to the Great Hall ravaged, eating like there was no tomorrow. Some nights Flint would make them go to the Quidditch field for practice at midnight. Harry would fall asleep instantly because he was so tired.

A couple weeks back, Harry had gotten a letter from Hermione, thanking him for talking to Ron. She said that she would watch out for him in Defense class and that her and Ron had started talking again. But as the weeks went on, nothing had even happened. Harry saw them in the Great Hall during lunch and dinner, joking around while talking to Longbottom and a couple other Gryffindors.

As Harry got back to the present, one of his fellow team member called out to him from across the Slytherin table. “Potter, I hope you didn't forget its Friday. Go get your broom and be at the Quidditch field in five.” It turned out to be Miles Bletchley who had called him.

“Alright. Don't start without me,” Harry called. He got up and walked out of the Great Hall, making his way to his dormitory. He grabbed his broom that he had out on his bed, since he knew that he would need it, and ran to the Quidditch field.

“Now that everyone's here, I'd just like to say that tomorrow is the first Quidditch game and we're playing Gryffindor, like always. There is no

way in hell that team can beat us. I have seen the people on that team: Wood, the Weasley brothers, a bunch of girls as their Chasers, and some kid that plays their Seeker. If you have to, play rough, but I know that this will be an easy game. So, let's get one last practice in before tomorrow. Come on, team!" said Flint, the Captain, as he jumped on his broom and flew away.

The rest of the team jumped on their brooms and flew until they were level with their captain. "Let's make it a good practice. I'll let the Snitch go for Harry, and then Bole and Derrick you, mates, can practice on the North side of the field, while Pucey, Higgs, Bletchley, and I practice on the South side," said Flint.

After the others had left to their designated area of the Quidditch field, Flint let the Snitch go. Harry watched it fly away. "Wait a couple minutes before you follow it," said Flint before he flew away.

As Harry waited, he watched the other member of the team practice vigorously. The Beaters on the North side were hitting the Bludgers to each other and would occasionally make targets with their wands. The Chasers would practice getting the Quaffle in the hoops on the South side, while the Keeper would try to prevent them from getting in. Harry realized that he had waited long enough, and looked around. The Snitch was nowhere in sight.

Harry began flying around because he knew the Snitch would be easier to find if he did. He saw the Snitch in the corner of his eye, but when he turned it was nowhere in sight. For some reason, Harry decided to turn around three-sixty. It turned out the Snitch had been behind him, but once he saw it, he immediately chased after it. It was only a foot in front of him. He leaned closer to the broom and it made him go faster. Harry put his hand out and stretched as far as he could. Harry rushed past one of the Chasers and almost knocked him off his broom, the rate he was going. Harry's eyes were locked on the Snitch, and wouldn't take them off until he had caught it. He saw himself move closer to the Snitch and grabbed for it. Harry felt the cold metal on his fingers and eventually stopped in the air, holding the Snitch.

"Yes!" Harry said excited.

“Nice one!” said a voice near him. Harry turned to see Flint flying near him. “Just remember that when we are playing the game tomorrow to wait until we get a decent amount of points before you catch the Snitch. But try to keep your eye in it; never lose it. If you do that, we’re sure to win. Practice a couple times before our practice ends. Okay?”

“Okay,” said Harry back. He let the Snitch out of his hand and it fly away.

--

They had practiced for hours into the night. They only went in when Snape had come to the field to tell them they had to eat dinner before it was taken away, and that they should get some rest for the game.

They all flew to the ground. “That was an excellent practice. Tomorrow we’re definitely going to win. I have no doubt in my mind. Get some food and rest, and I’ll see you all tomorrow,” said Flint optimistically.

Harry was so hungry, as were the other team members, that he didn’t even bother to put away his broom. They just went straight to the Great Hall. Harry laid his broom against the wall, and filled his plate.

When he had finished he went to the Common Room. Once he walked in Draco, Blaise, Crabbe, and Goyle came up to him, wishing him good luck.

“We went to the Quidditch field after we ate dinner to watch the team practice. You all are doing really well! Tomorrow is going to be a good game. I saw Gryffindor practicing on Wednesday and it seems they are pretty good team, too. I saw their Seeker, Harry, and you’re going to have some competition up there,” said Blaise. Everyone knew how excited he was because they all know how much he loves Quidditch.

“I’ve already competed against him. Remember about a couple months ago on a Friday?” asked Harry.

“Oh, I remember. We came out of class and saw you diving for the Snitch against that Gryffindor,” said Draco.

“That’s right! That was bloody amazing!” exclaimed Blaise. “Well, I hope you beat those Gryffindors. I know you can. We’ve all seen you!”

“Thanks, mates. I’m completely knackered from practice, so I’m going to get some sleep. See you in the morning,” said Harry, as he yawned. As he held his broom, he started to walk toward the dormitories.

The others started walking in the opposite direction, but then Blaise walked after him. “By the way, Harry, your owl came and left you a letter on your bed,” said Blaise.

Harry got to his dormitory and walked to his bed. He put his broom in his trunk and looked to his bed. The letter lay on his pillow. Harry saw that the thread, which had been tied to Hedwig’s leg and the letter, lay in untidy mess upon his bed. Harry noticed that the thread seemed to have been untied for Hedwig by someone. Harry picked up the envelope. It most likely came from Ron and Hermione. *Well, they’re probably not wishing me good luck.*

Harry was about to open the envelope, but he saw that it had been ripped open slightly, and sealed back badly with a spell. The first person that came to Harry’s mind was *Draco!*

Harry ripped open the letter to see what Malfoy had read.

Courageous,

Haven’t heard from you for a while. We just wanted to check up on you to see how you’re doing. I read your last letter, and will definitely look out for you in Defense class. Good luck tomorrow. Write back,

Cleverly & Humorous

In Ron’s unorganized handwriting, very unlike Hermione’s, were the words: *PS-You’re going to need a lot of luck because Gryffindor is an amazing team!*

Harry looked over the words. *Draco knows I’ve been talking to Ron and Hermione! How could he not? They’re talking about Gryffindor! I’ll*

have to be more careful concerning Draco and my letters. Harry opened the box on his bedside table and took out the necessary items for writing his next letter. He then jumped up so that he sat on the side of his bed.

Humorous & Cleverly,

I'm dead tired from practice, but I thought I'd write back to you anyway. When I came to my bed to the letter you sent, I found it slightly open. Someone had opened it and badly repaired it when I wasn't there. I think that it was Draco because he's been wondering about these letters for a long time. He, most likely, knows that I'm talking to you two. We'll have to be more careful about what we say in these letters, just in case he decides to peek at one of these letters again. Any road, I'm glad you are both going to watch for anything in Defense class...

Harry stopped writing and thought, I don't want to tell them about the mirror. But I want to tell them what happened with Professor Quirrel... I guess I'm going to have to make something up.

...A couple weeks ago (sorry for not telling you both sooner), I was walking around the castle, and I ran into Professor Quirrel. We talked about random things, and then he said he had to leave. When he turned to leave, my scar burned again, like it had in those Defense classes. Thankfully, it stopped and Professor Quirrel wasn't there anymore, but I found it odd that it happened then. Tell me what you two think,

Courageous

PS-You said that Humorous saw the Slytherin team practicing today. Then he knows that the team is good, and we don't need any luck because the Slytherin team is amazing, as well!

After rereading what he had written, Harry realized that to send the letter, he'd have to go to the Owlry. Just then an owl came into the dormitory; an owl he didn't recognize. It was dark brown and smaller than Hedwig. It was carrying some parchment and flew to Harry's bed.

Harry took the letter from the owl and read it. The handwriting was Hermione's.

Thought you might need an owl, since you wouldn't want to leave your dormitory. You're welcome, Cleverly

She's good. Harry attached the letter he had written to the owl's leg, but before sending it off, he wrote on the outside: "Thanks for the owl."

After the letter was taken away, Harry changed to his pajamas. He got into bed, but couldn't fall asleep because he was so nervous about the Quidditch game tomorrow. Though he would never have admitted that to Blaise or Draco, or even to Ron or Hermione.

As Harry lay there in the darkness, he heard someone creep into the room. Harry picked up his head slightly, to see that the person was nearing his bed. The person got closer and Harry recognized the somewhat graceful walk of Draco. Draco went to the side of Harry's bed and leaned over so that only they could hear.

"Harry, I know you're awake. And I know that you've been talking to that horrible mudblood and the Weasley. I've told you before that you shouldn't be talking to them if you'd like to have Slytherin friends. I'm just trying to help you," said Draco. Harry noticed a bit of sincerity in his voice, but it was quickly gone.

Harry sat up on his bed, "Well, I don't consider you reading through my personal letters, helping. So, I better not find you reading any of my letters again, Draco," said Harry in an angry whisper.

But Draco didn't bother keeping his voice down. "Well, what about the time when you grabbed the letter from my pocket!"

"I never read it! I just took it out of your pocket. That's all. This is completely different!"

Draco stood up fully. "I just wanted to find out who you were talking to. It's not like I would actually want to read *your* bloody letters! As if your letters are interesting!" said Draco rudely. "You can guarantee I won't be looking through your letters again."

Draco walked to the door. “Hope you sleep great!” yelled Draco, sarcastically. He woke up Nott who had been sleeping on the other side of the room. Harry heard Draco say, “Bloody idiot” under his breath before he stormed out of the dormitory.

Now that you've read it, REVIEW! Anyway, I hope you all liked it.

Preview of Chapter 16-A Fall Downward:

It's the first game of Quidditch; with people in the stands cheering and complaining, Lee Jordan yelling out the commentary, Bludgers and Quaffle's flying everywhere, and Harry almost being thrown off his broom twice...

"No time like the present."

-Mrs. Manley

16

A Fall Downward

Harry was running to get away from Draco. But Draco was as tall as a giant. He was chasing Harry down the Quidditch field throwing Harry's letters around in the air. The letters managed to get into people hands that were in the stands laughing at him. Harry could see his broom ahead of him, but no matter how fast he ran, he couldn't reach it and fly away from the giant Draco. Harry could hear Snape laughing at him from the stands, as he held his letters. Next to him, Harry saw Dumbledore laughing, as well.

"You're never going to amount to anything, Harry. You're always going to be a small, insignificant child," said Dumbledore, but the voice wasn't his. It was his Uncle Vernon's that was mocking him.

Harry kept running, trying to reach his broom. He looked over his left shoulder and saw that Ron and Hermione were standing around not doing anything, like they didn't even care.

"You walked away from us, so we're going to walk away from you, Potter!" called Ron. He saw Ron and Hermione walk away from him. He didn't want them to call him Potter; he wanted to be called Harry. Harry wasn't paying attention to where he was going, and tripped and landed into the only pile of mud in the field.

Harry suddenly opened his eyes and instinctively sat up. Harry looked at his watch and saw that it was around four in the morning. He laid his head back on his pillow and almost immediately went back to sleep.

--

After Harry had awoken for the day, he changed and went up to the Great Hall for breakfast. As he made his way there, he saw Snape.

“Good luck, Potter,” said Snape, as he made his way down the hall. There wasn’t a bit of warmth in his words.

“Err... thanks, Snape,” said Harry, with an equal amount of warmth that Snape had given him. Snape stopped in his tracks.

“Need I remind you that I never said that *you* could call me ‘Snape.’”

“On the first night of school you said that all the Slytherin’s could call you ‘Snape,’” said Harry, confused.

“I’ve changed my mind. The only thing you call me, is ‘Professor Snape’ or don’t say anything at all. No... you can call me ‘sir,’ as well, Potter,” said Snape with a smirk.

“Fine,” said Harry annoyed. He had no intention of ever calling Snape ‘sir.’ He started walking down the corridor to the Great Hall.

“Fine, what?” asked Snape, as he called after him.

“Fine, Professor,” said Harry, through clenched teeth. He didn’t even turn around to face Snape. He just began walking again.

--

Harry left the Great Hall, after trying to eat, and headed toward the field before the rest of the school was to go down for the Quidditch game. He went to the Slytherin locker room to change into his uniform. He put on the green uniform with his name on the back of the shirt, and grabbed his broom that someone must have brought down for him.

“Ready, Potter?” asked Flint, the captain.

“Err...” said Harry. He was now coming to terms with the fact that he was about to be in front of the whole school playing Quidditch as he competed for the Golden Snitch.

“Your nervous, I understand. I was nervous when I had to play for the first time. I still get nervous because you never know what’s going to happen in a game of Quidditch, that’s for sure. Though usually we’re

the ones to cause the trouble. But don't worry, you'll get used to being in front of a crowd. When you're up there, looking for the Snitch, the people will just fade away to nothing," said Flint

"Err, thanks," said Harry, still unsure about what he was about to do. Harry could hear people filling the stands, the sound of the students getting louder and louder with every passing second. He sat in a wooden bench, staring at the ground.

A loud whistle sounded. "Come on, team, its time to play!" said Flint. They all picked up their brooms and walked out into the field. Harry looked into the stands and saw so many faces he couldn't make out one from the other. The Slytherin side of the stands, cheered as they made their way onto the field.

Madam Hooch and the Gryffindor team were already at the center at the Quidditch field waiting for them. When they arrived Madam Hooch said, "I want you all to play fairly. George Weasley what are you doing? MOUNT YOUR BROOMS!" Both teams got on their brooms and at the whistle, flew off into the air. Madam Hooch threw the Quaffle into the air, set the Bludgers free from the restraining trunk, and let free the Golden Snitch.

"The Chasers have dived for the Quaffle! Spinnet gets the Quaffle first and passes it to Katie Bell. And she's going to try to score. Oh! Missed by nearly an inch! And Chaser Higgs of Slytherin has the Quaffle now. He's passed it to Flint, the Slytherin Quidditch captain; who-Oh!-just missed being hit by a Bludger on Fred Weasley's part! Flints going for a goal," said Lee Jordan, who was the announcer for the Quidditch games.

Harry was looking around for the Snitch, but it was no where in sight. He heard the Slytherin side of the field cheer. Harry guessed that Flint must have scored. Harry saw Leven nearer to the Ravenclaw side of the field, whereas Harry was near the Gryffindor side. He looked into the stands, for he couldn't see the Snitch anywhere in sight. Somewhere amongst looking for the Snitch, he found Ron and Hermione standing beside that boy Longbottom.

“That’s another 10 points for Gryffindor!” said Jordan. “That makes it 30 to 10 Gryffindor!” Suddenly, Harry heard something speed past his head.

“Sorry, Potter!” said Slytherin Beater, Derrick. Derrick flew past Harry to chase after the Bludger.

Harry saw the Snitch in the corner of his eye, but when he turned to follow it, it was gone from sight. Harry looked at Leven, who he hadn’t noticed it.

The scores began to grow. “And Johnson dodges the Bludger while holding the Quaffle. She passed it to Katie Bell. The Weasleys are teaming up on Flint, and-Oh!-they hit him! But Flint is still on his broom, and flew away. Too bad! Bell goes for the Slytherin goals, and Bletchley blocks it!” said Jordan. There were moans from the Gryffindor end, and Harry heard them loud and clear, since he was on their end. Harry decided to fly around in hopes that he would find the Snitch. Leven was doing the same.

Harry heard that the score was now 50 to 40 Slytherin. Harry looked around the Quidditch field. He looked up to see Bole and Derrick chase after Angelina Johnson. They knocked her off her broom when Madam Hooch wasn’t looking. They flew away from where they had knocked off Johnson, laughing.

“Life’s not fair, right, Weasley?” said Bole, as he sped past him, laughing even more. One of the Weasley’s, Harry wasn’t sure which one, glared at the two Slytherin Beaters as they flew away.

Slytherins was cheering in the stands. “Penalty!” yelled Madam Hooch. Gryffindor got a free shot at the Slytherin goals. “Spinnet scored! Gryffindor and Slytherin are tied 50 to 50!”

Harry looked in front of him just in time to see the Snitch twitchingly flying around. Harry raced for it, keeping his eyes focused just like he always did in practice. *Focus on the Snitch. Focus.* Harry heard Leven fly by his side. All of a sudden, Harry’s broom jerked backwards away from the Golden Snitch. *What’s happening? Why can’t I control my broom?* Harry was trying to get his broom to follow

the Snitch, but he couldn't control it. His broom was shaking vigorously, and Harry didn't know what was going on.

People in the stands were yelling and pointing towards Harry, realizing that he was slowly losing his grip on his broom.

"Hold on, Harry! Yeh can do it!" yelled Hagrid from the stands, but Harry didn't hear it from where he was.

His hands were sweaty from having held on to the broom and he was slipping. Suddenly, Harry's broom stopped trying to throw him off, though Harry didn't know why, and he managed to lower the broom to get back on. He looked around, wondering whether Leven had caught the Snitch. Harry didn't consider that if Leven had caught it, he would have heard roars of excitement from the Gryffindors. He saw Flint race toward him, "You okay?" Flint didn't wait for an answer. "Leven didn't catch the Snitch. He turned to see what had happened, thankfully. What was that act, Potter? Next time you see it, race for it!"

"That wasn't an act! Something was wrong with my broom!" called Harry, angrily toward Flint. But he wasn't listening anymore; he had flown away. After the score had risen, Harry saw the Snitch again, and chased after it again. He didn't want to be taken away from it this time. Harry was flying a couple inches higher than Leven. They both were following the Snitch at remarkable speeds. The stands were silent as they watched the Seekers. Harry's left hand was extended outward for the Snitch, but then Harry's broom jerked uncontrollably.

Harry was flung to the right and forward onto Leven's broom. Harry pushed Leven off his broom and they both fell over towards the ground. Harry felt the air fly past him, but then he started to slow, as he got closer to the ground. Harry knew that was Dumbledore's doing. When he sat up on the ground, he realized he had something in his hand: the Golden Snitch.

Harry didn't remember it going into his hand. *I must have grabbed it before I fell towards Leven's broom.* It hadn't really registered with Harry that he had won the game for the Slytherin's until the stands on the Slytherin side cheered. "Potter got the Golden Snitch right before

crashing into the Gryffindor Seeker Leven! Slytherin won!" said Jordan, though sadly.

Harry looked to the side and saw Leven sitting up next to him, upset. "Are you alright?" asked Harry. He got up to his feet. Leven got up, too.

"Yeah. I'm alright. You hit me hard though," said Leven, as he rubbed the back of his head. "Was that because you lost control of your broom, like you did earlier?"

"Sorry about that. Yeah, I lost control of it. I don't know how that happened," said Harry, as he still held the Snitch. Both the Slytherin team and Gryffindor team came toward them on the ground.

Harry gave the Snitch to Madam Hooch. "After you're done changing, come back for your brooms, which we have to go fetch," said Madam Hooch to Harry and Leven. The teams went toward their separate locker rooms.

"Good job, Potter," said Flint, when they were in the locker room. The rest of the team congratulated Harry. They all changed and left, except Harry. When he was done, he went back out into the field for his broom. Harry saw two brooms lying in the middle of the field. Harry walked over and picked up his broom. He looked over to Leven's broom. He had an older version, but that wasn't what distracted Harry. There were words engraved into Leven's broom: "ingredior vi ventorum."

Harry heard Leven walking over to where the brooms were, so Harry straightened back up. "Leven, what do those words mean?" asked Harry curiously.

"The ones on my broom? They mean, 'to proceed on the winds,'" said Leven. He bent over and picked up his broom. "Well... see you on the field." Leven turned and started to walk away.

"Bye," said Harry to himself, for Leven wasn't there anymore. Harry looked up to the stands, which were now empty of all faces that had been looking up to him. He should be happy. He had won the game for Slytherin, but he wondered why his broom had gone completely

mad. He looked at his broom, inquisitively. If there was something wrong with it, Harry wasn't sure he wanted to fly it anymore. But he doubted there was something wrong with one of the best brooms in the world.

"Harry!" He turned quickly to see Ron and Hermione a couple feet away from him. It was Ron that had spoken. Harry rushed over. "We want to talk to you about what happened during the game."

"You mean when I was almost thrown off my broom, and then actually was?" said Harry. They all started walking toward the castle.

"Well, yeah. When we were in the stands, I was looking through Ron's binoculars to get a better look to see if you were okay, and I saw across the way, Professor Snape. I looked closer and saw that Snape was looking at you intently, as he murmured something. I couldn't make out the words, but it looked like he was jinxing you, Harry. Luckily, someone accidentally tripped Snape and he fell into Professor Quirrel. But I knew that if he did it once, he was going to try to jinx you again. So I made my way to where Snape was. When I heard him muttering something, I put a silencing charm on him, that's probably why you suddenly fell over into Ackley. All I know is that, teachers should definitely not jinx their students brooms," said Hermione seriously.

"You said Snape hated you, but he must *really* hate you, Harry," said Ron.

"He only hates me because of my father, but what did my father do that was so bad? That's what I want to know," said Harry.

"I'd like to know, too. Cause Snape didn't try to knock you off your broom for no reason," said Ron.

"Harry, he could have hurt you... or worse! We have to find out why he did that. After dinner, I'm going to the library to figure out what that jinx was," said Hermione. "If you want, you can meet me there."

"We'll sit at different tables, just in case Malfoy comes in," said Ron.

“He already knows that Harry’s talking to us, remember?” said Hermione to Ron.

“Oh, right. I forgot,” said Ron.

“We didn’t have time to write back to your letter. But I thought it odd, that your scar burned as Professor Quirrel walked away. I was thinking there might be some sort of connection to Professor Quirrel, though I don’t know what it is yet,” said Hermione.

“Ha. You’re allergic to a teacher! I wish I were. Then my mum could say I wasn’t allowed to go to that class anymore. What a bore that class is!” exclaimed Ron. He laughed a bit, as did Harry.

“Really, do you two ever take anything seriously? We’re talking about Snape trying to kill Harry and his scar hurting him. Two things that are no laughing matter!” said Hermione in protest.

“Sorry,” Harry and Ron said at the same time to Hermione.

They were now before the Great Hall doors, which were ajar. Through the crack, Harry could see Snape talking to Dumbledore about something. Harry saw the expression of Dumbledore’s face change from content to worried. His eyes moved to the left of the table. Harry saw that the professors to the left were McGonagall, Flitwick, Quirrel, and others that Harry didn’t know as of yet.

“We’d better go inside. I’ll meet you two in the library after dinner,” said Harry. He just realized he was still holding his broom.

“Harry, you go in first then after some time we’ll follow,” said Hermione.

“See you, mate,” said Ron.

“See you,” said Harry before he walked into the Great Hall.

Once he walked in there was uproar from the Slytherin table; tons of cheering and applauding. Harry couldn’t help but smile when he heard his name being called followed by “is the best” or “rules.” Harry quickly glanced at the High Table. Dumbledore’s face still held a

worried expression, which made Harry's face change to that of the same expression, until he was ushered to the table. There, people congratulated him and shook his hand.

But as he ate he thought of the conversation he had just had with Ron and Hermione. He realized that it was going to be difficult to get away from them and to get to the library. *I'll figure it out later.*

A/N: Some of Harry's fears catching up to him and a bit of the Trio. Especially since there won't be a lot of the Trio in this story.

Preview of Chapter 17--Findings:

Harry told Ron and Hermione that he was going to meet them in the library, but, while tying his shoe, accidentally finds a tunnel that leads to a most unexpected place...

“The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.”

-Ellen Parr

17

Findings

As more people finished their dinner, Harry constantly heard more people come over to congratulate him about the Slytherin win. Harry sat next to Blaise and Nott, who were telling him about the highlights of the game, which he, of course, already knew. But Harry figured that if they wanted to enjoy themselves and tell him, why not.

The one person that had not come over to Harry, was Draco, but Harry didn't mind. He shouldn't have been looking through his personal things, anyway. When dinner was over, they all went to Common Room, and once Harry got in there, he saw tons of banners all over the room. One said, “Harry Potter Rules!” another said, “Best Seeker: Potter!” there was another that said, “Gryffindor Sucks!” and among the many was another that Harry noticed that said, “Slytherin is going to win the House Cup!” On most of the banners were large tough-looking snakes. There was one with a lion with a larger snake strangling it.

What Harry noticed more was the tons of great food all around him. It was food Harry didn't recognize, but it looked delicious. “Here, Potter, try this! Its from the Three Broomsticks in Hogsmeade,” said a bloke, who looked to be a year or two older than Harry. Harry took it and drank it. Harry could feel the warm liquid rush down his throat. It was very soothing. More people offered food, which Harry gratefully took. Nobody, especially Harry, questioned how anyone got this food, and frankly, no one cared. They were just happy to have in their presence.

After sometime, Harry realized that he had made plans to meet Ron and Hermione in the library. But how was he going to get away? If he went to the dormitory there would be no way to get to the library, but atleast he would be away from people. But that didn't help him a bit. *I'll go to the dormitory and then later sneak into the library. No. I can't do that. I have no idea what Hermione wanted to look for. I'll have to*

apologize to Ron and Hermione for not showing up, but if I leave, the other Slytherin's might follow me.

Harry got up from one of the couches where he sat surrounded by people, still holding an almost empty cup of Butterbeer. "Alright. I'm going to the dormitory. It's getting late," said Harry.

"Oh come on, Harry! You can stay up," said Blaise.

"No, its alright. I'll see you all in the morning. To Slytherin!" Harry gulped the last of what was in his cup and walked toward the dormitory. The people that had sat around Harry had said, "To Slytherin!" as well.

Near the opening to the stairs was Draco, who called to Harry. "Just wanted to say... good job today in the Quidditch game."

"Thanks," said Harry unpleasantly.

"Imasory," said Draco, mostly to himself.

"What was that?" asked Harry.

"I said...I'm sorry. I was wrong to go through your stuff," said Draco, through his teeth. He looked angry with himself for saying this. He held out his hand. "Truce?"

Harry was trying to hide the smirk. "How about friends?" Harry asked. Harry saw Draco's expression change to relief.

"Yeah, sure," said Draco with a small smile. They shook hands.

After shaking hands with Draco, Harry started walking down to the dormitory once more. He realized his left shoe was untied while he was in the middle of the stairs, and leaned against the wall, picking up his left leg to tie it.

As he was tying his shoe, the wall seemed to have disappeared, and he fell sideways. "Oh blimey!" Harry got up to see that he was in some sort of tunnel. He must have pressed a stone that opened up to this. It was a narrow tunnel made of stone. Harry noticed an unlit

torch on the wall, but didn't remember the spell for fire, so he lit his wand instead. "Lumos!"

Once his wand was lit, he made his way forward down the tunnel. *I wonder where this leads?* Harry knew he'd rather be searching these tunnels than in the Common Room, hearing more about what he had done in the Quidditch game.

After he went a couple feet, Harry saw that the stones that made up the wall seemed to have flown from nowhere to create the wall again. *Wait! How am I going to get out again?* Harry ran back to the stones that prevented him from the stairs. He shone his wand at the wall and looked at it closely. There was one large stone that stuck out. Engraved in the stone was a large "x." *Hopefully. This is the way to get back out.*

Harry continued down the narrow tunnel. He went on for a while, and it seemed that he was slowly moving up. Eventually he came to a break in the path. He could continue going forward or turn to the right. Harry knew that if he wanted his way back to be easier, he better follow the easiest route. So he continued to go forward.

After about ten minutes, there was another path, but this one led to the left. Still, Harry followed the onward route. He could always come back and search the other paths later. But it wasn't so much fun, walking down these paths alone. He would have wanted to go down the paths with Ron and Hermione, but they were Gryffindors. There was no way they could get to the opening from the stairs.

Harry thought of telling Draco, but then he saw a set of stairs a ways forward and forgot about it. He walked toward them and quickly went up them, anxious as to what he would find at the top of them. When he did manage to get to the top, completely out of breath, he found an old door. It was completely covered in spider webs. Harry was reluctant to open the handle, but did so anyway.

Harry was completely surprised when he opened the door to find... an empty room. What did he expect? There to be tons of gold or treasures of some sort. The room was also covered in spider webs, and was completely bare. It was a small, square room. Harry raised his wand higher to see if there was anything in the room.

In the corner of his eye, something shone in the light. But Harry couldn't find what it had been. The room was completely empty. There was no metal for light to shine off of. But then he saw it again.

From the door, he walked to the closest corner on the right side. He bent down and saw a golden coin that looked like a galleon, but there was no writing on it. Once Harry picked it up, words formed on the surface. "Moenia Permeo," said Harry, as he read it aloud.

The spider web-filled walls vanished around him to a room filled with old cardboard boxes piled on top of each other. He put the coin in his robes.

Harry read some of the boxes as he made his way toward the door: "Eldridge Lee," "Dilys Derwent," "Gwendolyn Hurst," "Rawlins Gray," "Evarerd Proudfoot," "Phineas Nigellus," and "Armando Dippet." Harry wondered whose names these were, but then wondered no more as he heard voices on the other side of the door.

Harry put his ear against the door and listened carefully. "Severus, I saw what happened. You do not have to tell me again," Harry heard Dumbledore say.

"But you're not listening to what I'm saying! It was Quirrel! I heard him; I saw him! He was standing next to me at the Quidditch game!" said Snape; he was somewhat out of breath.

"Severus, I am listening to what you are saying. There is no reason for Quirinus to do such a thing," said Dumbledore, his voice never raising.

"Then, do you have an explanation for why Potter's broom tried to throw him off?" asked Snape, still angered. Harry was listening to every word that was said.

"Sadly, no," said Dumbledore.

"Only dark magic could have done that to Potters' broom. You know that. No student could have managed that. So, clearly, if it wasn't a student, it had to have been another professor!" said Snape. *It was*

Snape, not another professor! Don't listen to him! Harry wanted to run into the room, and tell that to Dumbledore. But he thought better of it.

"No professor of mine would have tried to kill Harry, Severus. That I know!" said Dumbledore. It was clear in his voice that he was now beginning to get annoyed by Snape.

"If you're not going to listen to me, then I'll handle this myself!" Snape shouted. Harry heard him leave the room quickly, slamming the door. Once Snape had left, Harry heard Dumbledore exhale loudly. He turned back to the boxes behind him.

He knew knew what the names of the boxes were; they were the names of the old Headmasters and Headmistresses. Harry looked at the boxes, the name "Phineas Nigellus" interested him the most, and so he looked inside. Harry saw that there was a plaque on top, and picked it up. He used his sleeve to wipe away the layers of dust. It said, "Phineas Nigellus Black." The last name Black held no meaning to Harry; so he placed it on the floor, so that it would be easier to see what was in the cardboard box.

There were several books, that Harry took no interest in. There were some sheets of old parchment; there was no writing on it.

He continued to look in the box. At the bottom of the box, Harry saw, what was a small golden box. There was a large ruby on the top in the center, surrounded by small pearls. He picked it up realizing that he couldn't open it because he needed a key. Harry looked to where the key had to be put in the box; the key must be very small and narrow. He put the box on the floor. Harry searched the cardboard box, but found no key.

Harry finally decided to put everything back. As he was putting the books away, the golden box still upon the floor, Harry accidentally knocked over another box with his foot. When it fell to the floor, something inside it made of glass, shattered. Harry knew that Dumbledore had heard, so he grabbed the golden box and put it in his pocket before running to the back wall, and hiding behind the tallest piling of boxes.

"Nox," said Harry, silently extinguishing the light of his wand.

No sooner had Harry put out the light of his wand, did Dumbledore open the door to the small room. Light from Dumbledore's office flooded into the room.

"Hmm..." said Dumbledore. Harry heard him move farther into the room. Dumbledore went to the box Harry had knocked over. Harry picked it up and opened it. "*Repairo!*" After fixing what had been broken, he then went to the box that Harry had (*Stupid! Stupid!*) clumsily forgotten to close before hiding. Dumbledore gracefully walked over to it and folded back the sides, so that it was closed again. He walked out, gently closing the door behind him.

A/N: By the way, in case any of you forgot, Quirinus is the first name of Professor Quirrel. I hope you liked this chapter! I think it's pretty good. Please review!

Preview of Chapter 18-Next Day Nothing:

Harry manages to leave the room in Dumbledore's Office, and the next day Harry has an early morning talk with Draco over breakfast. About Apparating, the holiday, and about the room they happen to find months ago...

“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”

-Ernest Hemmingway

18

Next Day Nothing

Dumbledore closed the door, and the room was drowned in darkness. Harry breathed again. It had been an instinctual thing to stop breathing, as if his lungs had stopped taking in oxygen on their own, without his consent.

Harry lit his wand, after he heard Dumbledore move further away from the door. Harry turned and saw just wall behind him. He realized then that he had come into the room by the coin he had found. He took out the coin from his robes, and, once again, the words formed on the surface. Harry spoke the words quietly, so that Dumbledore wouldn't hear him. He was instantly brought back into the other room, and with a sigh of relief from Harry, as well.

He put the coin back in his pocket, so that he would be able to go back into the small room full of boxes. Harry wondered whether he needed to be in this room for the coin to work or whether it would work in other parts of Hogwarts, and maybe even outside it. He pushed the thought out of his mind as he walked out of the room, and followed the tunnel back to the stones that he had come through earlier.

Harry saw the stone that stuck out more than the others with the “X” on it. He wasn't exactly sure what he had to do to get back onto the stairs that led to his dormitory, so he touched the stone, but nothing happened. Obviously just touching the stone didn't work, so Harry decided to push against it. He put both hands against the stone that stuck out, and pushed it.

Surprisingly, Harry pushed the stone with ease. Once he did, the stones that made up the wall began to fly away, creating an opening to the stairs. Harry peaked out to see that no one was there, and quickly stepped onto the nearest step. He went down a couple steps, and turned to look at the hole in the wall, but it wasn't there anymore.

--

Harry awoke the next day, remembering that he had not met Ron and Hermione in the library. He knew that they were going to be mad at him for ditching them. Harry also remembered how Draco and him had become friends again. *Maybe I should tell Draco or Blaise. Since Ron and Hermione won't be able to see the tunnels.*

But Harry wanted to explore the tunnels on his own first, just incase there was something he didn't want Draco to see, like the room inside Dumbledore's office. Harry realized he didn't want Ron or Hermione to know about that room either. He wanted to keep it to himself. If, in the future, he wanted to tell Draco, Blaise, Ron, and Hermione, then he would, but not now. He wanted to keep it his own secret.

Harry looked around the dormitory. Blaise, Nott, Crabbe, and Goyle were still asleep. Harry saw Draco's bed empty. Harry got out of bed and changed into his robes.

He felt one side droop lower than the other. Harry put his hand in one of the pockets and pulled out the golden box. He hadn't realized he had put it in his pocket. He must have done it before running behind the boxes. He put the box in his trunk, all the way at the bottom, and covered it with some of his other robes.

Since it was Sunday, he wouldn't need any books, so he made his way to the Common Room, his hands free. Harry got to the Common Room and saw that Draco wasn't there. The banners were still hanging around the room, but the various empty mugs of Butterbeer were gone.

Harry was hungry, and decided it was a good a time as any to go to the Great Hall. It was about eight in the morning, which wasn't so early or late on a Sunday. Harry knew that there would be some amount of people in the Great Hall. Harry found Draco sitting near the end of the table with a box next to his plate.

"Morning," Harry muttered, as he sat down across from Draco.

"Morning," said Draco.

Harry grabbed some food for his plate and began to eat contentedly. "What's in the box?" asked Harry, before he stuffed some bacon into his mouth.

"Some sweets from my mum. There are some candies wrapped in gold foil, you can have those. I never liked those," said Draco unemotionally. Harry opened the box, and picked up one of the candies.

"What's in 'em?" asked Harry.

"Some sort of chocolate filling. I prefer vanilla, myself," said Draco. Out of nowhere he asked, "Are you staying here for the holiday or going home?"

"I'm staying here. I'd be off my trolley to actually *want* to go to my Uncle's house," said Harry. He unwrapped one of the candies and put it in his mouth.

"Why? What's wrong with your Uncle's house?" asked Draco.

Harry swallowed the rest of the candy to speak. "What's wrong? It's my Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia, and Cousin Dudley that are wrong. They've been cruel to me ever since I was given to them. Sometimes, I wish I was put into an orphanage rather than stay with them," said Harry.

"What exactly did they do to you? Did they abuse you?" whispered Draco, moving closer to the table to talk to Harry.

"No...well, not really, anyway. They just ignored me all the time, except for when they needed me. Its just horrible being there," said Harry.

"Oh. I didn't know," said Draco sympathetically.

Harry was a bit surprised at his show of sincerity, but continued, "Well, I'm going to stay at Hogwarts as much I can, so that I don't have to be there."

“Summer break is far off, but you can come to my house for part of the summer,” said Draco. “I’d have to ask my father, of course. But I’m sure he’d let you stay.”

Harry’s face lit up at the thought of spending less time at the Dursley’s. “Yeah, okay! Thanks,” said Harry with a smile.

“No problem.”

“So, what are you going to do over the holidays?” asked Harry.

“My father, my mum, and I are traveling to Europe for the holiday. We’re going to see Vienna and some other cities.”

“Lucky. I’ve never even been out of the country.”

“Well, when you get older you can travel anywhere you want. Especially when you can Apparate,” said Draco.

“What’s Apparate?” asked Harry.

“Apparating is when you go from one place to another by thinking about it. But you have to pass a test after you turn seventeen to Apparate,” said Draco. “My father Apparates all the time. I wish I could. It would be so much easier to get places. Pop and you’re where you want to be.”

“We have to wait until we’re seventeen? Can’t we learn how to do it on our own and then Apparate whenever we want?” asked Harry.

“I wish we could. But the Ministry of Magic would know if one of us were to Apparate before we passed the test,” said Draco glumly.

“How do they know?”

Draco shrugged. “I don’t know, they just somehow know that sort of stuff. Never really thought about it.”

“Well, that idea is out,” said Harry. He looked at the High Table. Dumbledore wasn’t there, but Snape was. Luckily, he wasn’t looking over at them. Harry moved closer to Draco. “Have you ever thought

about that three-headed dog we found in that room on the third floor?"

"Yeah, sometimes," said Draco. "Why? Have you gone back to that room?"

"Are you mad? I would never go back to that room. Its practically a death sentence," said Harry.

Draco chuckled. "Yeah, I guess so."

"What's a death sentence?" asked Nott, as he sat down next to Harry.

Harry and Draco looked at each other, giving each other a look that said, "Don't tell!"

"Nothing," said Harry quickly.

"Okay," said Nott, not really interested. He had just been trying to create some conversation. He filled his plate, and began to eat. "So, are you, mates, staying or leaving for the holiday?"

Draco answered first, "Leaving."

"Staying," said Harry.

"I'm leaving. This is a much needed break from classes, if you ask me," said Nott. Just then, Blaise, Crabbe, and Goyle entered the Great Hall and joined in the conversation when they sat down.

Crabbe and Goyle were also leaving Hogwarts for the holiday. "Well, I'm staying," said Blaise. Harry was relieved because he didn't want to be at Hogwarts by himself for the whole holiday. Harry realized he hadn't asked Ron or Hermione if they were staying or not.

Harry turned toward the Gryffindor table hoping that Draco wasn't watching, and saw Ron and Hermione sitting. Harry looked to the High Table, and saw Snape looking at him closely. Snape turned away when Professor McGonagall called him. Harry then looked at Professor Quirrel. He was sitting talking to another teacher whom Harry didn't know.

After eating and more talking, Harry and the others went to the Common Room. The rest of the day was spent playing chess, more talking of the holidays, and doing some work for tomorrow's classes. At some point while doing work, a letter was brought to him by Hedwig.

Courageous,

What happened to you? We were going to meet at the library, remember? Well, when you didn't show, Humorous and I left to go to some other work. We can go back to the library later, preferably, with you there. Write back,

Cleverly & Humorous

Harry got some parchment. He began to write back to them, knowing that he would have to lie, since he didn't want anyone to know that he had found tunnels.

Humorous & Cleverly,

Sorry. I couldn't meet you at the Library. The other Slytherin's just wouldn't let me leave. They kept giving me Butterbeers and sitting around me. Hopefully we can find another time to go to the Library. And I will go next time, promise.

Courageous

He sent the letter off. In less than five minutes they sent a reply, saying that hopefully during the week they could make time to go to the Library. He put the letter in his pocket, and continued his work. But soon another letter came. It was from Ron, saying that he wanted to explore Hogwarts sometime during the holiday break. Harry liked that idea, and said so in the reply letter back to Ron. Harry was somewhat glad when the day was over. It hadn't been the most interesting day. Hopefully, the days before the holiday would be better.

A/N: Sorry, this chapter was more of filler, though it did involve some interesting clues for the future if you look hard enough. I'm not going to give anything away directly.

Preview of Chapter 19--Unconscious:

It's Monday and Harry goes to his classes, and then its Tuesday and he goes to his classes, but while he's in Defense Against the Dark Arts his scar begins to burn again. But this time it gets so bad that he falls unconscious...

“Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world.”

-Arthur Schopenhauer

19

Unconscious

It was the last week before Christmas break. Friday, right after the last class, students going home for the holiday would be leaving. They would be getting home just in time for Christmas Eve dinner. Draco couldn't wait to get out of here for his trip to Europe. Harry just wanted the week to come to an end, but he had to get through it first.

Monday was very boring for Harry: History of Magic and Charms in the morning, and Transfiguration after lunch. Harry was learning how to get things to fly to him. Not something he was easily adapting to.

“I just can't get it!” exclaimed Harry frustrated, as he sat next to Draco in class. Hermione and Ron were sitting at the table in front of them. “The pillow just won't come to me!”

“Calm down. You just have to concentrate,” said Draco.

“I am!” said Harry, even more frustrated now.

Hermione turned around to Harry. He figured she had completely forgot that she wasn't supposed to be talking to Harry in public. “You have to concentrate. Focus on the object, like this,” said Hermione. Harry saw her focus on one of the pillows on Professor Binns' desk, and then flick her wand while she uttered, “Accio Pillow.” It smoothly flew to her, and she caught it. “Like that. Simple.”

“Maybe for you,” said Harry.

“I think you should mind your own business, Granger. Harry can take care of himself,” said Draco, as he sneered at Hermione. She quickly turned away to help Ron.

Harry went back to attempting to get a pillow to fly over to him. *Okay. Concentrate. Pillow. Pillow.* “Accio Pillow!” It flew over to him, but he was so excited that he had gotten the pillow to come off the desk, that he lost concentration, and it fell on the floor.

“Nice one,” said Draco with a smile. He had gotten used to the spell quicker than Harry.

Harry kept trying until he got one of the pillows to fly over to him. He had wanted the pillow to come over to him so bad, that when it did, it hit him in the face. “Ouch,” said Harry. The sound was muffled, as his mouth was behind the pillow. Draco and Blaise were laughing at him.

They soon went to Transfiguration. “Brilliant. Transfiguration,” said Draco sarcastically. “When will this week end?” He kept going on about how much he wanted to leave already.

“Draco, we all want the week to end, and we all hate Transfiguration. You don’t have to keep going on and on about it,” said Harry. He was getting annoyed at Draco’s constant mutterings about the holiday.

“Alright, alright. I get it,” said Draco. They walked into Transfiguration. Professor McGonagall had already placed a box of small birthday candles in front of each chair. The class found out later that they had to lay the candles out on the table and change them into one large candle. Hermione, of course, was the first to change the small candles to one large one.

Harry managed to get some of the candles morphed together, but he could still see the different colors of them and the different wicks. Draco couldn’t even get the candles to mesh together, so Harry tried to help him. But the class was soon over. Harry and Draco, as well as the others, made their way to their next class.

--

The rest of Monday had passed extremely slowly, as did Tuesday morning. But Harry managed to finish his lunch and make it to Defense Against the Dark Arts without dying of boredom, along the way. He had been doing some thinking of the Mirror of Erised lately. Mostly right before he fell asleep, and he was glad he didn’t feel

drawn to it anymore. Dumbledore had been right; the longer the time away from it, the less he would be drawn to it. Though Harry still felt saddened that he couldn't look into it to see his mother and father's eyes. Harry was even sad that he couldn't see his older self, anymore.

But while Harry was in the middle of Defense class, the boredom of the day quickly vanished for Harry. He had his book out, open, in front of him. They were reading about some new spell. Professor Quirrel usually just stood at the front of the class with his book open as he read for the class. But today, he allowed Hermione to read the passages from the book, as he walked around.

Professor Quirrel had been walking around the front of the class, but he had seen Harry and Draco muttering something, and decided to tell them to stop and pay attention.

"P-Potter, M-Malfoy. P-pay attention," stated Professor Quirrel. He turned away from them, and Harry's scar began to burn. He instinctively put his hands to his head, trying not to make any noise.

Professor Quirrel was still standing there, flipping through the pages, trying to find something in his book. The pain of Harry's scar continued to grow and ultimately it got so intense that he couldn't bare it anymore. He yelled in agony and fell off his chair onto the ground. He was on his side, gripping his head. Professor Quirrel turned suddenly at his cry.

"P-potter!" called Professor Quirrel, in a worried tone. He bent over to Harry.

Harry was holding tightly onto his forehead that his nails became to make indent marks on his skin. This had been a pain like Harry had never experienced before and he continued to cry out. Tears formed at the corners of his eyes from the pain. In the end, Harry fell into an unconscious state. The last thing Harry saw was Draco, Ron, Hermione, and Blaise looking over at him with worried eyes.

--

Voices awoke Harry and he found himself in the Hospital Wing. He saw that the curtains were drawn around him.

“What happened, Quirinus?” said a voice Harry recognized as Dumbledore’s.

“I-I-I’m not s-sure,” said Professor Quirrel. “I went over t-to P-Potter and M-Malfoy’s table because t-they were talking, and then I-I was looking through my b-book when P-Potter yelled and f-fell over. H-he was unconscious I-in a c-couple seconds.”

“That’s all?” asked Dumbledore calmly.

“Yes,” said Professor Quirrel. “M-my next class. I-I must get back.”

“Oh, yes. Do so what you need,” said Dumbledore to Professor Quirrel. Harry heard him leave the room. “Poppy, has he awoken?”

If they found he was awake, they were sure to send him back to class. But, Harry didn’t have time to pretend he was asleep. “Yes, he’s awake.” She came over to Harry’s bed. He pulled himself up, so that he sat up. “Here drink this.” She handed him a small bottle, and he drank it with some hesitation.

The curtains ruffled again, but more gently this time as Dumbledore entered. He stood at the side of his bed. He first turned and said, “Poppy, may we have some privacy? Thank you.” She turned and left, muttering something.

“Harry, could you tell me everything you remember about what happened in class?” asked Dumbledore.

“Well, I was just sitting there and Professor Quirrel came over. I remember seeing him turning a couple pages in his book, but then I felt that horrible burning pain in my scar. I’ve felt it previously before today, but its only been for a couple seconds,” said Harry.

“When was the last time you felt your scar hurt you?” asked Dumbledore.

It didn’t take Harry long to remember. It had been the night that Dumbledore had made him watch the mirror being taken away from him. “When Professor Quirrel walked me back to the Slytherin Dungeons. When he turned away, my scar burned. I thought he

heard me wince, but when the pain had subsided I looked up and he had gone.”

“Has this happened before during classes?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Which classes?”

Harry thought back. The only class it really happened in was the Dark Arts class. “Well, Defense Against the Dark Arts. That’s the only class it’s really happened in.”

“Hmmm... that’s interesting,” said Dumbledore, as he looked away pondering something.

Harry was curious. “What’s interesting?” asked Harry. Dumbledore didn’t seem to hear him.

Dumbledore turned back to him. “Harry, you have to go back to class. Potions, I believe you have,” said Dumbledore.

“Lucky me,” Harry said sarcastically.

A/N: This is the shortest chapter I’ve had in a long time, and I apologize about that. This chapter was about 3 pages on Microsoft Word. The next chapter is almost 6 pages. Review! **The next chapter is so much better! I promise!**

Preview of Chapter 20-Room of Buried Secrets:

On Thursday, Harry meets Ron and Hermione in the Library to figure out the spell that was used to during the Quidditch game on Harry’s broom. But after going to the Library, they come upon the room Draco had shown Harry. But when Harry touches one of the candles, something odd happens...

“Nothing is secret which shall not be made manifest.”

-Luke VIII. 17

20

Room of Buried Secrets

Harry made plans with Ron and Hermione to meet at the Library before lunch. They knew that this would be a perfect time because Draco had gotten detention with Professor McGonagall for speaking out too many times. He had also gotten 20 points removed from Slytherin, as well. Harry eventually finished walking up the many moving stairs to the Fourth Floor and walked into the Library.

Upon walking in he saw Madam Pince telling some other students to “hush up.” Harry walked in further trying to find Ron and Hermione. He came to a table and recognized their bags on the floor beside a table. He went to the Spell Books section of the library, and eventually found them.

“Hiya, Harry,” said Ron enthusiastically. They were near a window in between two bookcases. On the window, Hermione had piled a couple books.

“Hi, Harry,” said Hermione with a smile. “Here look through these. Tell me if you see a spell that mentions making someone’s broom go out of control.” She handed Harry two large books.

“Well, this is a great welcome,” said Harry.

“Tell me about it, she made me look through three books already,” said Ron, flipping through the pages of a fourth book.

“I just want to find the spell, and with another two people it might go faster. I *Might* /I , being the key word, if you don’t keep looking through the books, Ron,” said Hermione.

“Alright, alright, I’m looking,” said Ron. Harry was searching through the books Table of Contents, but there was only one chapter of spells for brooms, but it was nothing to kick a person off a broom. He put

the first book back on the shelf, and looked at the other one Hermione had practically thrown at him.

Table of Contents:

Chapter 1: Spells to protect a door—p. 1 Harry looked further down.

Chapter 5: Spells to keep out the unwanted—p. 124

Chapter 12: Spells for a broom—p. 450

Harry flipped to the page. There was nothing, just ways to protect a broom. But then Harry looked at the bottom of the page. It read:

Note: Any spells to make the person on the broom be harmed, would be in Dark Arts books.

Harry closed the book. *Damn.*

“We won’t find anything in these books,” said Harry.

“Why not?” asked Hermione, as she looked up from her book.

“It said at the bottom of the page that spells like the one Snape had used, can be found in Dark Arts books,” said Harry.

“All this searching for nothing! Great,” said Ron. He closed the book with a loudly.

“There’s no way we can look at those books, though. They are in the Restricted Section, and you need a pass from a professor just to go in there,” said Hermione.

“Well, you could get a pass, Hermione. Any teacher would trust you,” said Harry.

“Especially McGonagall or Binns,” said Ron.

“I’ll see what I can do after the holiday,” said Hermione.

“SHH!” said Madam Pince, more loudly than them.

“Let’s get out of here,” said Ron. “Before Madam Pince yells at us again. Besides, I can’t stand looking at anymore books.”

“Are either of you staying for the holiday?” asked Harry. He put the other book on the shelf, as had Ron and Hermione with their couple of books.

“I’m staying,” said Ron.

“I’m not. I’m going to Europe with my family,” said Hermione.

“Lucky you,” said Harry. Ron mumbled something about how he wished he was leaving for a nice holiday.

“Have you ever been out of the country?” asked Harry to Ron. Hermione had grabbed her bag from the table and they were now walking out of the Library into the Fourth Floor corridors.

“Once or twice when I was little. We had to use Floo Powder, of course,” said Ron.

“Floo Powder?” asked Harry curiously.

“Floo Powder is a powder that enables a person to travel by walking into a fireplace. When you want to travel by Floo Powder, you take a handful of it, go into a fireplace, and say where you want to go at the same time you throw the powder to the floor. Then magically you go where you want to,” said Hermione cleverly.

“Wicked! I’ve never heard of that before. Can you use any fireplace? Could I use it from the Dursley’s?”

“No. It has to be at a magic place, as far as I know,” said Hermione.

“Who are the Dursley’s?” asked Ron.

“My evil family who I’ve been living with since I was one.”

“Evil?” asked Ron skeptically, but with a bit of a laugh.

“Alright maybe not evil, but horrible, anyway,” said Harry. Harry looked from Ron to Hermione.

“Well, now I know why you’re staying at Hogwarts for the holiday,” said Ron, jokingly.

“Ha. I wish I could stay here permanently,” said Harry.

“Well, Harry, if you really hate it there, then you can come over to my home during the summer break. I know that my mum and dad wouldn’t mind,” said Ron.

“Thanks Ron! That sounds brilliant!” said Harry.

“You can come too, Hermione. Another friend at the Burrow, is always welcomed,” said Ron happily.

“Thanks, I’d love to go! But why is it called The Burrow?” asked Hermione.

“Well...you just have to see it. Then you’ll know,” said Ron.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” said Hermione. They were now walking down the corridor where the statue of Angerona was, but Harry didn’t notice it until Ron pointed it out.

“Look at that statue! I’ve never noticed that statue before,” said Ron. He walked right up to it, and looked at it curiously.

“I’ve never noticed it either,” said Hermione curiously. She too walked up to it, to get a better look. Harry had stayed a bit further back, since he had already seen it.

“That’s the statue that guards the room Draco showed me. Do you want to see it?”

“What time does he get out of detention?” asked Hermione. Harry checked his watch.

“Not for another hour.”

“Well, what are we waiting for? Lets go in!” exclaimed Ron excitedly, but then he paused. “Wait. How do we get in?”

Harry moved to the statue, as Ron and Hermione moved back. Harry looked into the eyes of the statue before saying: "My secrets are yours past this door." He bowed gracefully, and moved back up in time to see the statue remove the cloth from her face, like she has done previously. She moved away revealing the door.

"Bloody hell!" exclaimed Ron as he followed Harry toward the door. Hermione was close behind. There was something on the door, Harry hadn't noticed before, so he stopped. Carved into the wood elegantly were the words: "Room of Buried Secrets." Harry opened the door and walked in, Ron and Hermione right behind him.

Ron sat himself on one of the small couches, which matched his hair with hardly any difference in color; Hermione upon a beautiful purple couch. "Wicked room," said Ron, looking around.

"Why is it called the Room of Buried Secrets?" asked Hermione. She was looking around, too. She noticed the table with incense, and got up to light one.

"Well, Draco told me that when someone tells a secret in this room, another candle goes into the air, with that person's name on it," said Harry. Harry had closed the door and had taken a seat across from Ron on a green couch that matched his marvelous eyes.

Harry looked up to the candles. There were lots of them, but Harry guessed that the number of the white candles reached just over fifty. Those candles were the only things illuminating the room, but the room was clearly lit, though with an air of mystery. Harry wondered what names were on the candles, so he got up and stood on one of the couches.

"What are you doing?" asked Ron. Harry looked down and saw that Ron was now standing, but on the floor, and Hermione had turned from the table with incense.

"Just looking at the names on the candles," said Harry, turning back to the candles. He heard Ron climb onto the couch he had been sitting on, to stand on it. Harry could just hear Hermione mutter something that sounded like, "Boys." Harry was too short to even reach a candle that was lower down.

But he could see a name: Lucius Malfoy. The name was on a lot of the candles. Harry knew that the name was Draco's father's name. Harry turned back to Ron, "What names do you see? I can see Lucius Malfoy."

"Yeah, I see Lucius Malfoy. But I also see Bellatrix Black, and... the names are too far away, but it looks like the last name begins with an L," said Ron.

"Have you ever heard any of these names?" asked Harry to both Ron and Hermione.

"Only Lucius Malfoy. He works with my dad at the Ministry of Magic," sad Ron.

Harry saw Hermione shaking her head, as she sat on the purple couch again. "Well, I've heard Lucius Malfoy before. That's probably Draco Malfoy's father," said Hermione.

"It is," said Ron. He got down from the couch.

Harry too got down from the couch and stood on solid ground to the right of Ron, which felt better for his legs. "Do you think I could get one of those candles over here?" asked Harry.

"How?" asked Ron, curiously.

"Use Accio," said Hermione.

"*Accio candle!*" called Harry, concentrating on one of the white candles that had said the name Lucius Malfoy. To Harry's surprise, the candle moved toward him. Once it was near enough, he grabbed it.

Once he did, the room changed a little. Some of the couches were in a different place and the room seemed dimmer than before. Harry looked up and saw that there were fewer candles. He turned to his left; Ron wasn't standing beside him anymore, and Hermione wasn't sitting on the purple couch. The purple couch wasn't even in the same place. Harry heard the door handle being turned, but didn't have time to hide when fiveolder students came in.

They didn't seem to see him. The students settled themselves on the different colored couches. They looked to be in their seventh year. "Malfoy, why did you bring us in here? What do you want to tell us?" asked a dark-haired male. Harry saw his brown eyes look toward Lucius with curiosity.

Harry finally realized that he was seeing into the past. The male with long white blond hair looked smug about something, as he sat down on the green couch Harry had been standing on previously. He pulled up his left sleeve, showing something, but Harry was too far to see. Harry moved closer, but Lucius pulled his sleeve back down before Harry could reach him.

"I got it yesterday. I met the Dark Lord in the Forbidden Forest, and he took me to a graveyard. My first task for him is tonight," said Lucius proudly. Harry saw his gray eyes looking at the others in the room. "You should all join him. He's not just a wizard; he's so much more than just a simple wizard. I'm telling you. He knows more dark magic than anyone." The four other students around Lucius Malfoy looked pleased and excited.

"When can we arrange a meeting?" asked a female long dark hair. Harry saw that she had dark, sunken eyes.-

"I'll bring you tonight into the Forbidden Forest. We should get the others to come, too," said Lucius. "We'll meet tonight in the Common Room at one in the morning. I want to make sure there are no younger students around. That first year boy Severus Snape has been following me," said Lucius.

"Don't you think he'd be another person we should bring along. It seems he would be interested. That boy Snape knows more spells than I knew when I was a first year," said a male that looked a lot like Goyle. Beside him, on the red couch, sat another male that looked like Grabbe.

"And those friends of his, as well, like Rosier and Wilkes," said the female.

"They're too young. But make sure your cousin, Sirius Black--, doesn't find out. I don't want any Gryffindors prying in our business," said Lucius, coldly.

"He won't if we're careful," said the female.

"Then be careful," said Lucius. The dark-haired male and the female nodded, and Harry saw that the light changed slightly.

Harry looked to the left to see that Ron was standing there. Harry's body must have just moved in the vision.

"What the bloody hell was that!" asked Ron flustered.

"What happened to you!" asked Hermione upset. They had both spoken at the same time.

"What do you mean?" asked Harry, realizing their frustration at him. He also realized the candle was still in his hand. The color of the candle changed to black, much to Harry's disappointment. Draco would definitely notice that one of the candles was now a completely different color. Harry let go of the candle and it flew back into the air, to the place it had been before Harry called for it.

"You were just standing there completely frozen!" said Ron, still upset.

"I tried to shake you, but there was some sort of force preventing me from touching you," said Hermione, thinking more clearly now, but still worried.

"I didn't know that. I'm sorry I scared you two," said Harry apologetically. "But once I touched the candle, it brought me back into the past. I saw Lucius Malfoy and some of his friends in this very room. He showed the rest of them something on his left arm. Do you know what that might have been?"

Ron and Hermione didn't know. They eventually left the Room of Buried Secrets. Ron said that he had left his bag in the Library, Hermione wanted to do work in the Gryffindor Common Room, and Harry went to Slytherin Common Room, so they all went their separate ways.

-Bellatrix is three years older than Lucius, so she wouldn't be at Hogwarts anymore, but I wanted her to be seen in the memory.

--The Marauders and Snape are six years younger than Lucius.

A/N: This is one of my favorite chapters! I really liked writing it, so I really hope that you liked reading it. Please tell me whether you thought it was good or not. It would really help me in the future. Thanks!

“Carelessness does more harm than a want of knowledge.”

-Franklin

21

Be Careful

Friday, the last day of classes before the holiday.

Harry was in Potions class, making a potion called Rememigrus. It was supposed to heal small cuts, if you made the potion correctly, but Harry hadn't been listening. Harry was figuring out how to make the potion with Draco, but they weren't getting very far. Everyone was working hard on the potion, while Snape walked around the tables, making comments every so often.

“Does any one know what this potion is used for?” asked Snape as he stood in the middle of the room. Most looked up from their cauldrons, but some didn't. Hermione immediately raised her hand; Snape ignored her, like he always did. Harry saw Snape's eyes move to his, and his lip curled malevolently. “Potter. What is this potion used for?”

“I...don't know, professor,” said Harry. Harry heard Draco say quietly to him, “Why are you calling him ‘professor’?” Harry ignored him for the time being.

“Then, what is the third ingredient you must add to the potion?” asked Snape, clearly enjoying Harry's ignorance of what the potion is or does. In the corner of his eye, Harry saw Hermione raising her hand, once more.

“I don't know, professor,” said Harry, becoming irritated by Snape.

“Do you even know the name of the potion, Potter?” asked Snape, clearly mocking him. Harry heard Draco whisper, “Rememigrus.” But Harry didn't want to use an answer from another person, so he once again ignored Draco.

Harry knew what Snape was trying to get him annoyed, but it was working. "Why don't you ask someone who knows the answers!" said Harry, his voice raised as he glared at Snape.

"Get back to your potions," said Snape sharply, to the rest of the class. He swiftly and fluidly walked over to Harry. He leaned over the table, staring at Harry, his hands separated on the table. He then turned to Draco. "Malfoy, you need more Bruisewort, get it from my desk."

Draco got up and once he did, Snape turned to Harry once more. "Do *not* speak to me like one of your peers, Potter. It's not becoming of you. So, I'd be more careful, if I were you," said Snape.

"Maybe if you treated me like a person, I might actually respect you," said Harry, still angered. "And I can watch out for myself, thanks."

"Careful, Potter," said Snape coldly. He stood up from leaning over, still looking at Harry with vicious eyes. "And I don't think you can."

"What are you talking about?" asked Harry, he was still angry, but now he was curious. *What does he mean I can't talk care of myself!*

"Just watch what you say in my class, Potter," Snape said, before he walked back to the front of the room. He took a seat at his desk. Harry noticed that Snape wouldn't look at him for the rest of the class, which Harry knew was very unlike Snape. He didn't even get up to criticize the student's potions, but Harry didn't take notice, nor did anyone else. Harry and Draco got up from their seats when the class was over and made their way to the Great Hall for lunch.

"What the bloody hell was that about?" asked Draco, when they finally sat down at the Slytherin table.

Harry and Draco sat next to each other on the side of the table that faced the rest of the Great Hall. Blaise was sitting on the other side of Harry, but he was talking to Nott, who usually ate by himself. Harry noticed that Crabbe and Goyle were sitting opposite Draco and him, but were too involved in their plates, which had a massive heap of food upon it.

"I've told you before: Snape hates me. He was telling me that he thinks I can't watch out for myself," said Harry. He grabbed some food and sloppily put it on his plate, not really caring what it was.

"Why would he tell you that?" asked Draco, as he too put food on his plate. "Come on. I've told *you* before that Snape doesn't hate you."

"Dumbledore told me that my father and Snape were in the same year, and that they hated each other."

"So? What does that have to do with Snape and you? Harry, you think about things too deeply." Harry could see that Draco didn't believe him.

Harry looked at the High Table and saw Snape engrossed in a conversation with another professor. Harry moved closer to Draco and said, "Snape hated my father and now he's taking it out on me."

"Are you being serious or is this some sort of joke?" asked Draco, but from the look on Harry's face, he knew that he was no joke. "Well, then do you know why Snape hated your father?"

"No. Dumbledore said that I had to ask Snape if I wanted to know. But its not bloody likely he's going to tell me anytime soon. I'm surprised you don't see him glaring at me all the time," said Harry.

"I'm sure I'll notice it now, now that you've brought it to my attention," said Draco, turning back to his food. Harry saw Draco glance up to the professors, and Harry, once again, did so too.

Harry saw that Snape was speaking to the same professor, but then stopped and turned to Harry and Draco, who were looking at him. Snape slowly turned back to the other professor, who hadn't noticed anything.

--

After lunch, Harry, still wondering about what Snape had been talking about in class, went to the Common Room alone; Harry had a free period the others didn't have. As he sat down on a couch near the fire, his thoughts traveled to that day when he had been in that small room

in Dumbledore's office. How Snape had accused Professor Quirrel of doing something to Harry's broom.

But Professor Quirrel wouldn't jinx my broom, only Snape would. As Harry continued to think about it, his thoughts began to click into place. That must have been why he said I should watch out! Because he might jinx my broom again! I have to talk to Dumbledore!

Harry quickly got up from the couch and put his hand to the stone. It seemed to move too slowly, knowing that he wanted to talk to Dumbledore immediately. He walked all the way to the stone gargoyle, which stood before the escalator-like stairs. Harry muttered, "Drooble's Best Blowing Gum." But nothing happened. He tried so many other candies, but it was when he said, "Chocolate Frog" that the gargoyle finally moved.

Harry finally stood before Dumbledore's door, and all the eagerness vanished. Maybe he shouldn't tell Dumbledore. He could deal with it on his own, right? While staring at the door, Harry saw something he hadn't noticed before: a knocker. The knocker was an elegant Griffin.

"Harry, you may come in, if you wish," said Dumbledore, from the other side of the door. Harry jerked slightly when he heard Dumbledore address him, especially because he didn't want Dumbledore to know he was there. But he opened the door and walked in anyway.

RememigrusPotion I created. **Remem**diumcure, remedy, nostrum, medicine. **Migrus**small.

A/N: Sorry that this chapter was a short one. I needed this chapter to further emphasize how Harry and Snape hate each other, and how Harry thinks that it was Snape who tried to hurt him during that Quidditch match.

“The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance – it is the illusion of knowledge.”

-Daniel J. Borstin /p

22

Illico Res

Harry saw Dumbledore sitting at his desk, his hands on the table, along with many objects. The room was filled with objects as well. But Harry didn't look too closely at them. He had something else on his mind.

“Professor, I think that it was Snape that jinxed my broom at the Quidditch match. And I think that, if he has the chance, he might do it again,” said Harry, hurriedly. He was now standing in front of Dumbledore's desk.

“Sit down. Why do you think it was Snape that tried to jinx your broom?” asked Dumbledore.

Harry sat down in the chair that stood before Dumbledore's desk. He noticed there was a plaque that said, “Albus Dumbledore.” Just like the one that he had found in the old headmasters box. “Well, I told you before that he hated me...a lot. But he also just told me in class that he thinks I can't watch out for myself and that I should be careful. I think he means that I should be careful of him, and what he can do. Because he could jinx me again,” said Harry. The nervousness wasn't in Harry's face, but it was in his eyes.

“Harry, I don't think that any of the professors at Hogwarts would harm a student, but I know that your broom was jinxed. By whom, I don't know, and that I am trying to figure out. Yes, Snape has a dislike for you, but I know that he would *never* /I intentionally harm a student,” said Dumbledore.

“If you're sure,” asked Harry.

"I am. And I'm sure Snape had a good reason for telling you to be careful. He knows, as do the rest of the staff, that you are a unique entity," said Dumbledore.

Harry still wasn't sure that Snape was an innocent man. He'd need some serious persuading to think like Dumbledore about him.

Just then, a small, white owl flew into the room and landed on Dumbledore's desk. Dumbledore stood up and put his left arm out. The owl jumped onto it. "I must read this. I'll be back shortly," said Dumbledore. He went into another room with the bird on his arm.

Harry finally had a chance to look around the room. At first he looked around the room from his chair, but then he saw something small and golden on one of the shelves on the left side of the room. He got up and walked over to it. Harry reached up and grabbed it. It was a small, golden key attached to a chain. It looked like it would fit the golden box that he had found. He stuffed it in his pocket; if it didn't fit the box, he could always return it later.

Harry looked more at the shelves. There were tons of objects he had never seen before. But there was one thing that really caught Harry's eye: an orb-like object. It seemed to be transparent, but yet it had a grayish color to it towards the center. Harry wanted to pick it up, so that he could get a better look at it, but he thought better of it. He had no idea what it did, and didn't want to test it at the moment.

"Ilico Res," said a voice from behind Harry. Harry turned to see Dumbledore, as he made his way across the room in his graceful manner.

"What?" asked Harry curiously.

"The object. Its called Ilico Res. It can show you where a person is; only a person that wants to be found, however," said Dumbledore. He now stood beside Harry.

Harry was intrigued by the object. "How does it work?" asked Harry.

"If I'm looking for someone that could, quite possibly, be in danger, then I'd use this. If they were in danger, then they might want to be

found. All I have to do is have it in my hands, and then close my eyes while I say, 'Positus' followed by the person's name," said Dumbledore. "If they want to be found, then I can see them and where they are, if not then nothing happens. It can be very helpful, and others times not at all."

"When have you used it?" asked Harry.

"Let's just say that I have used it, Harry," said Dumbledore. Harry could tell he was going to change the subject, but then he seemed to change his mind. "Actually, I used it to find you; a couple times, now that I think about it. When you were a baby after...that night. You wanted to be found among the rubble, and I used it then. Also during this past summer when your Uncle and Aunt kept hiding you away from Hogwarts. Like when you were stuck in the middle of the ocean with them. I used it, hoping that you would want to be found."

"Well, of course, I would want to be found. The Dursley's are horrible," said Harry.

"Using the Ilico Res was how we found you. The Dursley's were very insistent on not letting you go to Hogwarts, but of course, you belong here," said Dumbledore with a small smile.

"I'm glad you found me, Professor," said Harry sincerely returning the smile. Harry really meant it, too. He loved and adored Hogwarts; Harry wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Though he did feel lonely at times.

"I'm very pleased," said Dumbledore, as he returned the smile. He went to sit at his desk. "So, is there anything you would like to discuss while you're here?" He sat behind his desk. Harry thought of the other Headmasters and Headmistresses, but he couldn't imagine anyone else, but Dumbledore, behind it. No one else belonged there.

Harry finally realized that Dumbledore had asked him a question, but he had nothing else he wanted to talk about. "No. I don't think so," said Harry.

"Well, if that's the case, then you should go enjoy the last of your free day," said Dumbledore, as he looked at Harry over his half-moon

spectacles. Harry turned and walked to the door. He had opened it and walked through, and was just about to close the door, when Dumbledore said, "Remember, Harry, just knock." Harry nodded to Dumbledore, and closed the door.

--

Harry decided that going to Hagrid's for the rest of the afternoon, would be a brilliant idea. So, he eventually found himself knocking on Hagrid's door. "Harry!" exclaimed Hagrid. Harry walked in, and took a seat on the large couch. There was a large fire going in the fireplace, and Harry was glad because it was cold outside.

He had visited Hagrid's a couple times on the Friday's he had no classes. Harry enjoyed spending time with Hagrid; the laughs and the all the creatures that Hagrid told him about. Hagrid said, many times in fact, that he always wanted a dragon. He said he wanted a baby dragon. Harry knew Hagrid missed the fact that baby dragons turn into adult dragons. But he didn't mention that.

"Wan' some tea, Harry?" asked Hagrid.

"Yeah, sure," said Harry. "So, Hagrid, what have you been up to?"

"Th' usual, I guess. Takin' care of the grounds. I'm sure yeh saw the twelve trees in the Great Hall this mornin'. I had teh go find 'em and bring 'em in. What 'ave yeh been up teh, Harry?" asked Hagrid.

"Also the usual. Classes, homework, and threats," said Harry jokingly.

"Threats?" asked Hagrid worriedly. He brought over two cups of tea.

"Okay, not threats, necessarily. But today Snape told me I should be careful and watch out. I told you before that I think it was Snape that jinxed my broom. Ron and Hermione saw it," said Harry.

"That's rubbish, that is! Snape wouldn't hurt yeh. He's a Hogwarts teacher."

"Dumbledore said that, too."

“Well, then! Listen teh Dumbledore. He tends teh always be righ’, yeh know.”

“Well, I’m not convinced. I think that—”said Harry. He had stopped suddenly because someone knocked on the door. Hagrid got up and walked toward it. He opened it to let in someone.

“Come in,” said Hagrid. Harry saw Ron enter Hagrid’s cabin.

“Ron!” exclaimed Harry excitedly. “Wait. Aren’t you supposed to be in class?”

“Yeah. We had Herbology with the Ravenclaws, but Hermione and I met Malfoy along the way. We told him to go away, and he put a spell on Hermione. It made her hair get longer and longer. I took her to the Hospital Wing and then Madam Pomfrey said that I had to go to class, but I don’t want to. So, I figured I’d talk to Hagrid, since you’re always in the Slytherin Common Room,” said Ron. He had taken a seat next to Harry. Hagrid made him some tea, as well.

“Malfoy put a spell on Hermione?” asked Hagrid.

“Yeah. I was going to jinx him, but he ran away. Professor McGonagall was coming,” said Ron, sad that he didn’t get the chance to jinx Draco.

“I have to talk to Draco. If he wants to be my friend, then he can’t go jinxing Hermione or you,” said Harry.

“If you think that will stop him from being a nasty twit,” said Ron.

“I don’t know, but I’m going to tell him to stop being mean to you and Hermione, but then you have to stop being mean to him,” stated Harry.

“Oh, come on, Harry. You can’t honestly tell me that you think Malfoy is going to stop. You know he’s a mean person, I know you know,” said Ron.

“He’s not that bad when you get to know him, Ron,” said Harry.

“Well, I don’t want to get to know him,” said Ron.

“No offense, but he wouldn’t want to talk to you anyway,” said Harry, not in a mean tone.

“I figured that one out,” said Ron before sipping some tea.

Hagrid joined them at the table. “Do you know why Draco hates you so much? I mean, there’s got to be a reason,” said Harry to Ron.

Hagrid said, “Malfoy’s father ‘as taught him that people Muggle-born are bad. Arthur, that’s Ron’s father, doesn’t believe that at all. He works in the Ministry of Magic, and so does Lucius Malfoy.”

“Well, they work together, but what does that prove?” asked Harry.

“Me dad actually is obsessed with Muggle objects. But they’ve just always hated each other. Don’t know why exactly,” said Ron. Harry and Ron turned to Hagrid in unison. Hagrid was sitting there, sipping some tea. He looked up to see the pair of them looking at him.

“Oh, no. I’m not tellin’ yeh two anythin’,” said Hagrid, as he put the cup down. “Besides, I got work teh do. I’ll see yeh two at dinner.”

Soon, Harry and Ron were pulling their cloaks closer to them as they stood outside, shivering. “What should we do now? I was going to say, ‘Lets go to the Common Room,’ but we have different Common Rooms,” said Harry.

“I have an idea. Lets go see Hermione. She’s probably dead bored being cooped up in the Hospital Wing without any books,” said Ron. Harry and Ron chuckled, and started the walk to the Hospital Wing.

They began to walk up the stairs, when Harry spotted Snape coming down.

Luckily, Snape was looking down, so Harry took the opportunity to whispered to Ron, “Snape.” They separated more, so it looked like they were walking next to each other, but not together.

When Snape came closer Ron said, "Potter, you git!" he walked quickly up the stairs, and out of sight. Harry stopped.

Snape gave Harry a look and kept walking. Harry quickly walked up the stairs to follow Ron. Harry got up there, and found Ron waiting for him. "Good acting," said Harry, but he knew better. Ron had probably thought of when Harry had left him and Hermione to go to Draco, so that it seemed more real.

"I try my best," said Ron jokingly. They continued on to the Hospital Wing without any more occurrences of the sort. When they got there, they saw one bed closed off by curtains. Under the cloth of the curtain, they saw auburn hair. "Hermione's hair must have grown a lot," said Ron.

They walked toward the curtain, and pulled it away. They saw Hermione on the bed, and Madam Pomfrey, using a wand to shorten Hermione's hair. He was reluctant to walk in because Madam Pomfrey would see him, and know that he is friends with Gryffindors, but he went in nonetheless. "Are you alright, Hermione?" asked Harry. Madam Pomfrey looked at him, and then at his robes, seeing the Slytherin snake. Harry began to feel awkward, but tried to ignore it.

"Yeah. I'm all right," Hermione said saddened. Both Harry and Ron weren't convinced.

"What happened before class? Ron told me, but not in detail," said Harry.

"Ron and I were walking to Herbology, when Malfoy came toward us with Crabbe and Goyle behind him. Malfoy said, 'Hey look, it's a Weasel and a Mudblood. Don't get too close. They could be infectious.' Ron yelled at the two of them to go away, but they didn't. Then Malfoy threw a spell at me to make my hair grow longer. He ran when he saw Professor McGonagall coming," said Hermione. Madam Pomfrey sat at the edge of the bed, still cutting Hermione's hair with her wand.

"I'm going to talk to Draco about this. You two are my friends, and he has to understand that," said Harry.

“No, don’t. I remember what he said. That he would tell the other Slytherin’s about you being friends with us. He’d make your life horrible, Harry. Its alright, we can deal with him on our own,” said Hermione firmly.

“No. I can’t let you let you do that. I’ll talk to him,” said Harry.

“Harry! Just forget it! I’m serious,” said Hermione.

“Fine,” said Harry. Harry was planning on keeping to his word, but he promised himself that if anything were to happen to Ron or Hermione by Draco’s doing, then he’d talk to Draco and his other Slytherin friends.

“Hermione, are you still going to Europe?” asked Ron.

“Yeah. I think my hair will be back to normal soon,” said Hermione.

“You two must leave now. You’ve had your visiting time,” said Madam Pompry, hurriedly.

“See you later, Hermione,” said Ron.

“Bye,” said Harry.

“Bye. Thanks for coming to see me,” said Hermione, cheerfully to them both.

Harry and Ron exited the curtained area and left the Hospital Wing.

A/N: I just want to talk about a certain character, whom you guys might think appears too much: Snape. I know he is in the story a lot, but he is a very prominent person in this story, just like he is in the actual Harry Potter books. Just so you know he will be important, even more so, in Harry’s 3rd, 6th, and 7th years at Hogwarts. Especially the last two, but you’ll find out about that later. For now, REVIEW!

Preview of Chapter 23-Unwrappings:

Draco and Hermione have left for the holiday, as well as some others. Harry wakes up Christmas day, thinking that no presents would lie before him on his trunk. But he's pleasantly surprised to find there are presents. And then he's surprised again by what the presents are...

“Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.”

-John Lennon

23

Unwrappings

Draco, Nott, Crabbe, Goyle, and Hermione, as well, had left on the Hogwarts Express to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. Harry had been in the Common Room, playing chess with Blaise when they realized that they were both hungry, and went to the Great Hall. When they walked through the doors, they saw the twelve large, ornament-covered trees. Snow fell from the ceiling, but vanished before it hit them. The goblets sang Christmas carols even when full of pumpkin juice, so it sounded like someone was gurgling the song. The High Table was filled with teachers, but there were only two house tables out because there were less students staying at Hogwarts.

Harry saw Ron sitting at one of the tables, talking to Seamus Finnigan and Dean Thomas. Harry and Blaise sat at the other table and enjoyed their Christmas Eve dinner. After eating and much laughing, which went well into the night, Harry decided to go to bed. Him and Blaise were the only two people in their dormitory.

Harry felt miserable, knowing that he weren't going to get any presents. He had never gotten any real presents from the Dursley's. The most he had gotten was some of Dudley's some old, too big shirts. But Harry fell asleep without another thought.

--

Harry awoke to Blaise's hands shaking him as he said, “Wake up, Harry! Its Christmas!” Harry rubbed the sand from his eyes, but didn't put his glasses on yet. He sat up, he could see a blurry figure of Blaise next to him.

“Why? I'm not getting any presents. I never have,” said Harry groggily, wanting to go back to sleep.

“But you do have presents! Quite a few in fact,” said Blaise. His blurry body moved to the foot of his own bed.

Harry quickly reached for his glasses. Upon putting them on, he saw at the foot of his bed were boxes of presents. Harry jumped out of bed to look at them better. Harry reached for the one on top. It was a small box, poorly wrapped. He opened it furiously. It looked like a small, round glass object. Harry didn't know what it was. Harry turned to the little envelope that was still stuck to the ripped wrappings. Harry opened it.

Courageous

If you're wondering what your present is, it's a Sneakoscope. It whistles when something or someone dodgy is near you. I thought it would be of use to you; the other Slytherin's don't seem to be the most trusting of people, no offense. Merry Christmas!

Humorous

PS-I thought maybe that you and me could go roaming around the castle for fun tomorrow night. It'll be easier to sneak out because there are less people. Write back.

“Yes! My mum got me something I wanted,” said Blaise at the next bed. Harry opened his next present to see it was chocolate pudding. Harry looked at the card it was from Hagrid.

The next present was from Hermione. It was a book full of simple, but useful spells; he read the title: “Little Spell Book” by Vene Libel. Harry took the card and read it.

Harry

Merry Christmas! I hope you enjoy the book. I thought it would be a good book for you to have. By the way, when you open the front cover of the book, you'll find a quill. It let's only the intended reader or readers see what you wrote, no matter what ink you use. I bought one for Ron and I, as well. (I used my quill for this letter, in fact. That's why I used your name.) See you soon,

Hermione

Harry opened the front cover of the book, and saw a pure white quill. He knew he would be using that every time he wrote to Ron or Hermione. Before turning to his next present, he went to his bedside table and put the quill in the box.

The next present turned out to be from Blaise. It was a book of Quidditch moves and helpful tricks to do on a broom called "Tricks for the Seeker" by Reor Solan.

"Thanks, Blaise!" said Harry. Harry saw that he had only a couple presents left. Wrappings were all around the foot of Blaise' bed, but it was just the same around the foot of Harry's bed.

"No problem. Thanks for the book on advanced Chess tricks. This will be very useful," said Blaise with a large smile, as he flipped through the pages.

"Your welcome," said Harry. He turned back to his presents. Harry opened the envelope that lay on top of the highest present to Harry.

Harry

Just thought I'd tell you now that the object in the box is called a Conglomerate Stone. Each different colored stone on the whole stone (when you see it, you'll know what I mean) is a Portkey. So you can make each stone go to a certain place. But the best part about it is that the stone stays a Portkey to that place, even after using it a thousand times. Choose the places carefully because once a stone is assigned, it can't be changed. To make a stone a Portkey, you have to say the name of the place while putting your wand against the stone, but you have to be in that place at the time. Enjoy. Merry Christmas.

Draco

Harry opened the box and saw the Conglomerate Stone. It looked like a regular rock with different colored stones in it, some further in the stone than others and some larger than others. Harry looked at the

stones; there was a red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, black, gray, and white stone, which were all on different places on the rock.

As he held it, Harry realized that it was incredibly light. Like he was holding a couple of pebbles instead of a stone. Harry put it in his pocket out of pure curiosity to see if he could feel it tugging down, but he couldn't. Pleased, Harry took out the Conglomerate Stone and put it on his bed.

The next present was wrapped in simple brown paper with string around it. Harry immediately knew it was from the Dursley's. Harry opened it to find a bunch of pencils and a school rubber. Inside the box was a scrap piece of paper that said, "Can you stay at the school during the summer, too? Find out." *Bloody helpful pencils and a school rubber is at Hogwarts.* Unfortunately, Harry knew Dumbledore would not allow him to stay during the summer.

Harry looked at his trunk. There was only one present left upon it. As he looked at the last present, he hoped that the others had liked the presents he had bought for them. Blaise said he had liked his book. Harry remembers ordering different kinds of good-looking candies for Ron, a bag for Hermione that organizes all the things placed inside, and for Draco a satin-covered rectangular box that he can keep precious items in since there is password to open it Blaise came over and stood next to Harry.

"Opened all my presents. I see you have one left," said Blaise. "Open it!" He said in an excited tone.

Harry unwrapped it. "It's a cloak," said Harry with a confused tone. He touched the material as he held it; it felt like he was touching warm wind.

"It looks like silk. Can I feel it?" asked Blaise. Harry nodded. Blaise touched the fabric. "Wicked! That feels like air! It's amazing!"

"I wonder who would give me a cloak like this? Its looks dead expensive," said Harry.

"Was there a card?"

"Yeah, I think so," said Harry. He put the cloak on his trunk and picked up the parchment. "It says, 'This once was your fathers. I'm sure you'll come to realize what it is. Choose carefully when you use it, and who you let know about it. It might come to be useful.' Odd."

"There's no name," said Blaise, as he looked over at the card.

"The card said it will be useful, but how? It's just a cloak," said Harry.

"I don't know, but I think you should try it on, before I do," said Blaise, with a smile.

Harry picked up the cloak again. He swung it around his shoulders and around his body, so that it covered him completely. "Bloody hell! Where'd your body go!" exclaimed Blaise. Harry looked down, and shock covered his face.

"Bloody hell! My body!" Harry ripped off the cloak, and his body became visible again. "Well, now I know why the person said it would be useful. I can be invisible."

"It's an Invisibility Cloak! They're very rare. Who would give you one?" asked Blaise.

"I think I know," said Harry more to himself. He was thinking Dumbledore.

"Who?" asked Blaise, before he picked up the cloak from the floor. He held it in his hands feeling the unbelievable fabric.

"Never mind," said Harry. "I wonder if I can see through the cloak while it's covering me."

"Try it," said Blaise. Blaise handed Harry the cloak. He pulled it around his body, but covered his head, as well. "Can you see through it?"

Harry walked to behind Blaise, and then spoke. "Yeah," said Harry.

Blaise jumped in surprise, and turned around. To him, no one was there. "Bloody hell, Harry! Where are you?"

Harry took off the cloak, laughing. "Do want to put this cloak to good use?"

"As in what? Walking around the castle?"

"Yeah. We can do some looking around," said Harry.

"We can pull some pranks on people! Filch. We have to do something to Filch," said Blaise, excitedly.

"Like what? I don't have anything for pulling pranks," said Harry.

"Neither do I," said Blaise miserably.

"We don't have to use anything," said Harry.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he always walks around the castle, right? We could just walk up to him and poke him and make walking noises right near him. He'd go bonkers!"

"Good idea! We can start after dinner," said Blaise.

"Sure. After that do you want to try some of those tricks from that book you got me, on the Quidditch field?"

"Alright," said Blaise. Harry put the presents he received into his trunk, and locked it. He didn't see a rubbish bin, so he left the wrappings for later.

--

After a great Christmas day and then an amazing Christmas dinner and mouth-watering afters, Harry and Blaise left for the Common Room to quickly get the Invisibility Cloak, which Harry had left in the corner. He had put it on the ground, so it seemed invisible. Harry quickly grabbed it, and turned to see that Blaise had already put his hand to the wall.

"Come on," called Blaise. He seemed a little too excited.

“Wait. We should put the cloak on in here, not in the corridor. Just in case anyone sees us,” said Harry.

Luckily, no one else was in the Common Room, so Harry pulled the cloak over both of them and they stepped into the corridor. “Let’s look around first, then we can look for Filch,” said Blaise, in an almost-whisper. They both spoke in whispers, for fear of being heard.

“Okay. Let’s see... where should we go?” asked Harry.

They were walking up the stairs to the ground floor. When they got to the middle of the stairs, a group of third year girls started walking down the stairs, giggling. Harry and Blaise pressed their bodies against the railing of the stairs as the girls walked by, but one of the girls was swinging her arms jokingly. Her hand hit Harry in the chest, and she suddenly stopped and turned, but no one was there to her. The rest of the girls didn’t notice and had kept walking. “Odd,” said the girl, before he hurried after the others.

“Close,” said Blaise.

“She didn’t know we were there. She just thought what had happened was odd.”

“She might tell her friends, though.”

“Even if she does, they aren’t going to think that two boys were under an Invisibility Cloak. You said yourself they were very rare.”

“I guess your right. Let’s keep walking,” said Blaise. They got to the top of the stairs and went along the corridor that led to the Great Hall. But they didn’t walk long; they soon saw a door on the ground floor of Hogwarts that said “Caretaker’s Office.”

“Blaise, let’s go in Filch’s Office,” said Harry mischievously.

“Is Filch in there?” asked Blaise.

“I don’t think so. He’s probably pacing on one of the higher floors. But even if he is in there, he’s not going to see us,” said Harry.

"Alright. Lets go in," said Blaise with a sly smile.

While under the cloak, Harry and Blaise moved toward the door. It was old and the sign seemed like it was about to fall off. Harry slowly turned the handle and pushed it open gently, so that the door swung into the room. It creaked loudly.

A/N: I know it's sad that Harry didn't get a sweater from Mrs. Weasley. Maybe he will next year. You'll just have to wait... a while. What do you think of the Conglomerate Stone? **The places that Harry assigns to the stones will be posted on my profile page as the story goes on and as he assigns them. It will permanently be there if you want to remind yourself of what stone goes where, so no worries.** Review, please...

“The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.”

-John Powell

24

Filch's Office

Harry slowly turned the handle and pushed it open gently, so that the door swung into the room. As the door moved, it creaked loudly. They saw that the office was empty. They quickly scrambled in and closed the door. It was very dim and smelled of dust and rust. Harry pulled off the cloak, but kept it in his hands just in case Filch showed up.

Harry saw a couple large, metal cabinets that were rusting in places. He went over to them. After opening a couple of the drawers, Harry realized that they contained records of every student Filch ever punished. Harry looked at all the little labels for each drawer; he saw that some people had their own drawers. There was “Weasley Twins,” “Sirius Black,” a boy Harry didn't know, and “James Potter.”

Harry's eyes widened when he saw his father's name. He opened the drawer and saw it filled with paper. Harry picked one up. It read:

October 4, 1973

James Potter was caught before he jinxed Severus Snape in front of the lake. It occurred during midday in between classes.

Punishment: Detention with Professor Walsh, who caught him.

Harry put the paper away and picked up another.

December 25, 1973

James Potter and Sirius Black were caught wondering the corridors after hours on the fourth floor.

Punishment: Cleaning trophies in the Trophy Room.

“Harry,” called Blaise.

Harry put away the paper and closed the drawer, not knowing he had closed it incorrectly, leaving it slightly open. He turned to Blaise, who had been looking through some other drawers on the other side of the room. Harry walked over and realized that Blaise was looking up at something.

“What are...?” asked Harry, before he looked up, too.

Harry looked up to see two chains hanging from the high ceiling of the room. The chains were old and rusting, but looked as if they had been oiled yesterday. They were dangling a couple feet above Harry and Blaise’s head.

“Does he still use those?” asked Harry, frightened by the thought.

“No. Dumbledore wouldn’t allow it,” said Blaise.

“Good,” said Harry, more relieved. “What did you find?”

“I found some drawers full of objects confiscated from the Weasley twins. What about you?”

“The cabinets over there are full of documents of each student he ever punished. There are tons of papers,” said Harry.

“There would be. This school has been around practically forever. Come see what I found,” said Blaise.

Blaise motioned for Harry to follow him. Next to Filch’s desk, which was falling apart, was another rusty cabinet. Harry looked at the labels on the drawers. “Unknown Objects,” “Confiscated from Weasley twins 1,” “Confiscated from Weasley twins 2,” as well as numerous others.

The drawer labeled “Confiscated from Weasley twins 1” was slightly open. As Blaise pulled the drawer further open, many objects met Harry’s eyes. All of objects were unknown to him, and as to what they did, but he could figure that out later.

“Grab some interesting items,” said Blaise, as he reached in. Harry put the cloak over his shoulder and looked through the drawer with

Blaise. He put a couple items in his pocket. "What do you think about—"

Harry and Blaise stopped suddenly at the sound of the door creaking. They both quickly stuffed whatever they had in their hands, into their pockets. Harry pulled the cloak from his shoulder and pulled it over the both of them, just as the door fully opened.

While they were under the cloak, Harry and Blaise got up and walked to the farthest corner from Filch's desk, which he was now walking to. As Filch walked to his desk, he muttered something under his breath, so neither of them could hear. Filch sat down and exhaled loudly. Harry noticed that Filch hadn't closed the door completely, thinking that maybe they could make a break for it.

He spoke louder now, so they could hear what he was saying, "Those damn students. Always ruining the civility of this school. If only I could use my precious chains." He said the last and looked up with an odd delight. When he looked back down, the happiness in his face, vanished completely.

Filch quickly walked around his desk to the drawer that Harry and Blaise had been looking through. They had forgotten to close it. He slammed it shut out of anger. "Students!" said Filch. He rushed out of the room, slamming the door, as well.

"Let's get out of here," said Harry.

"Yeah, before he comes back," said Blaise. They went out the room as quickly as possible while under a cloak, carrying some items in their pockets.

When they were down the corridor closer to the stairs that led to the Dungeons, Harry spoke, "I think we should call it a night because if I'm right, then Filch will have gone to Snape."

"Yeah, that's a good idea. We can look around the castle another time," said Blaise.

When they were safely in their dormitory, Harry took off the cloak and threw it onto his bed. "It was harder to walk with these... 'illegal items'," said Harry jokingly.

" 'Illegal items.' I like that," said Blaise. "Let's dump all our finds on the floor." Harry put his hands in his pockets and put the couple of items he had collected, onto the floor.

"Harry, what's this?" asked Blaise. In his hands was the golden key that he had taken from Dumbledore's office. *I completely forgot about the key!* Blaise was looking at it closely.

"Oh, that's mine," said Harry. Harry knew that if he grabbed it out of Blaise's hands it would have looked suspicious, so he put out his hand. Blaise placed it on his hand, and Harry put it back in his pocket.

"Wicked. Did you know that the key had the letter 'B' inscribed into it?" asked Blaise.

"No. I guess I never looked at it closely enough," said Harry. Blaise shrugged and bent down to look among the various objects, that now lay upon the floor. When Blaise was occupied with their findings, Harry quickly took out the key and looked at it. He saw the inscription; the one letter was thin and curvy and beautifully printed into the gold. He stuffed it back into his pocket and bent down to help Blaise.

"What have we got?" asked Harry to Blaise. Harry saw that Blaise had sorted a couple of the objects together by how they looked.

"Well, I placed these candles over here, and I've started sorting these coins. Help me out," said Blaise.

It didn't take them long to sort what they found because they hadn't gotten a lot of stuff. Harry sat on the floor and crossed his legs as he picked up a coin. Blaise was looking at another "illegal" object. Harry looked at the pile from which he had taken the object he was holding. One of the candles had a paper stuck to it. He picked that one up and read it out loud, " 'Smell Starter: when lit creates a horrible smell around the room.' So, that's what it is."

“Wicked! Malfoy is going to love those! We can set those around the castle sometime,” exclaimed Blaise.

“If we’re going to tell him or any other person, we should keep some of this stuff for ourselves. We don’t want the others taking all our stuff, since we were the ones to get it,” said Harry. Harry placed the object back among the others.

“Good idea. We can split what we want evenly between us, and put the extra things somewhere for the others,” said Blaise.

“Nice idea.” They sorted through the “illegal” objects they had collected from Filch’s office into three different piles. One pile for Blaise, one pile for Harry, and one pile of extra objects, though this pile was considerably smaller than the other two. Harry and Blaise put their objects into their separate trunks. The extra stuff was put on the little green table near the fireplace in the room.

“Harry, do you know the time?” asked Blaise. Harry looked at his watch and told Blaise that it was almost nine at night.

“I’m going to go to the Common Room to read the book you gave me,” said Harry. He grabbed his cloak from the bed and threw it into his trunk, and then grabbed the book.

“I’ll do that same. I should catch up on my reading, anyway,” said Blaise. He dug for a book in his trunk. When he found the book, he held it in the air, saying, “Aha! Got it!” He closed his trunk, and Harry and Blaise left for the Common Room. When they got up there, Harry saw that there were three others in the room. A girl, who looked to be a second year, was near the window drawing, and two older boys, who were fourth years, were in the corner playing chess.

Harry sat at the chair closest to the fire, while Blaise took the seat next to him. They sat there quietly for a while, reading to themselves. The older boys in the corner would laugh loudly, occasionally. Sometimes, the boys would speak loud, so that the others could hear what they were saying. They began to talk loudly again.

“Sometimes my mum and dad are such a bother,” said the first boy.

“How so, Tristan?” asked the other.

“My mum still sends me letters from home, asking how my day is going,” said Tristan. “Can’t she just leave me alone.”

The other boy was laughing. “I didn’t know you still got letters from your parents. I thought that stopped during the middle of first year.”

“No. She still sends me them. I bung them into my trunk. Sometimes, I don’t even read them, but I have to respond sometimes, or else she’d probably think I’ve died,” said Tristan. The other boy was laughing. The rest of the conversation, Harry couldn’t hear because the boys finally quieted down.

The thought that the older boy, Tristan, was discarding letters from his mum as if it was nothing, saddened Harry. Harry would never do that to the letters his mum would write to him. He’d cherish them forever. Harry was looking at the floor, his book on his lap turned upside down.

“Harry, are you alright?” asked Blaise.

“I’m fine,” Harry replied, only looking up to respond to Blaise.

“Was it what those two said? About his parents?” asked Blaise carefully.

“Yeah, I guess,” muttered Harry.

“If it makes you feel better, my dad died, too. I never met him. And my mum is constantly remarrying,” said Blaise.

“I never knew, Blaise. Sorry,” said Harry.

“It’s okay,” said Blaise. He turned back to his book, so did Harry.

When the time began to near eleven, the three older students left down the stairs. Harry saw that Blaise was still intently looking at his book, Harry turned to his book, as well. He was learning tons of new tricks. There were loads of tricks to swerving around other players.

Harry kept reading. He eventually looked up when he heard the stone door sliding open.

Snape walked in, not looking happy at all. "Potter, if you please," said Snape, motioning for him to come over. Harry got up and put his book down, looking at Blaise. He was fast asleep in his chair, his book still open in his hands.

"Were you out tonight?" asked Snape.

"Only for dinner," said Harry lied.

"Forget something?" asked Snape. Harry looked at him curiously. "Professor."

"I was only out for dinner, *professor*," said Harry agitatedly.

"Do you have any idea why possessions of Filch's are missing?" asked Snape to Harry.

"No, professor," said Harry.

"Don't lie to me, Potter! I know it was you! The cabinet drawer labeled "James Potter" was closed incorrectly. No one else would have looked in there, but *you*!"

"I wasn't in there, Professor! You just want another reason to punish me!" said Harry loudly. Blaise awoke.

"What's going on?" he asked groggily.

"Zabini, I suggest you go to your dormitory, unless you want detention," said Snape threateningly. Blaise picked up his book and left quickly.

"No one else would have gone looking into that drawer. I know it was you," said Snape, his voice considerably lowered in volume, but the tone was as crude as ever.

"Then prove it, professor," said Harry. Harry knew he couldn't and Harry smirked at the thought.

“Arrogant, just like your father,” said Snape. He turned and put his hand on the stone. It slid open and he left.

“I don’t know why you hated my father, but you don’t have to take it out on me!” Harry called after him, just before the door slid shut.

Professor WalshNot a real professor from Hogwarts. I got the name from my Algebra teacher.

A/N: “Bung”—to throw something. I like that word. And by the way the things that Blaise said about his father and mother are true. Hope you enjoyed the chapter. If you did, tell me!

Thanks for reading...

Preview of Chapter 25--Late Night Dispute:
Harry finally looks inside the golden box he had found in that room outside Dumbledore’s Office. Later that night, before he meets Ron, Harry sees Snape and Quirrel fighting...

“Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names.”

—John F. Kennedy

25

Late Night Dispute

Harry knew that Snape had heard what he had said, before the stone closed. Harry turned away from the wall, angry and frustrated. He was angry with himself, but more at Snape. *He's always bloody accusing me of everything!* He grabbed his book and went down the stairs toward the dormitory.

Once he walked in, he saw Blaise walking back and forth, his arms crossed. He looked up when he saw Harry enter. “What was that? I could hear Snape yelling at you as I went down the stairs,” said Blaise. Harry walked further into the room, bung his book onto his bed and sat upon the side of his bed that faced Blaise’s.

“Though Snape can’t prove it, he accused me of being in Filch’s office, which I know we were in, but... he said I was arrogant, like my father. And then just walked away,” said Harry. “I know that Snape and my father were in the same year here at Hogwarts, but I don’t know why he hated my father.”

“I couldn’t tell you because I have no idea. But how did Snape know that you were in Filch’s office?” asked Blaise, curiously. He leaned against the side of his bed that faced Harry’s.

Harry sighed heavily, knowing that he had to retell his stupid mistake. “I left the drawer slightly open because I had closed it wrong,” said Harry.

Blaise yawned. “Well, if we ever go in there again, just make sure everything’s closed correctly. Anymore mistakes and you’re sure to get caught.” Harry nodded in response. “I’m going to sleep. I’m knackered,” said Blaise, before he yawned again.

Harry and Blaise had both slept in, but the rest of the school had done the same as well. Even the professors, it seemed, had taken the morning for some extra rest. Harry awoke to find that Blaise was still asleep. It was late morning, and Harry knew he wouldn't be able to go back to sleep now that he was awake.

He changed into one of his cloaks, putting his hands in the pockets because the fire on the other side of the room was beginning to go out, and found in one of his pockets the golden key attached to the chain.

He had completely forgotten about it, though Blaise had mentioned it yesterday evening. Harry went to his trunk, opening it slowly, so as not to wake Blaise, and took out the golden box from the bottom of the trunk. Harry put it in his right pocket. The box weighed down the right side of his robes as he made his way to the Common Room.

Before going into the room, he made sure that no one else was there. And much, to Harry's pleasure, there wasn't. He went to the table in the corner of the room, and placed the box on the table. The golden box, as well as the red ruby atop it, shined marvelously in the firelight. Making the gold of the box look even more golden. The key also shined as he took it out of his left pocket.

Harry was hoping that the key would fit into the box and (Yes!) it fit perfectly. Turning the small key to the right, he heard something click quietly. Harry looked behind him, just to make sure no one was there, and then put both hands on the side of the box to open it.

When opening the golden box, Harry wasn't planning on seeing an old bit of parchment. It looked like it had been ripped from the corner of a larger piece. The writing on the parchment was small and condensed, but the words curved nicely. It read:

12 Grimmauld Place

Harry had never heard of such a place. He was going to put the parchment back into the box and close it, when he noticed that there was another object that had been hidden from view by the parchment.

Harry picked it up, looking over his shoulder once more. He felt as if someone was there, but no one was in sight. He turned back to find a silver ring with a large black stone in the center. The stone was a very opaque black and on the face of the stone was the same engraving that was on the key: the letter B. The silver continued to shine a white-ish glow, even with the orange light from the fireplace.

Harry was tempted to put it on as he held it in his hand, and did so. He laughed when he put it on, it being too many sizes too large for him. *It could fit Uncle Vernon's hand!* Harry felt the ring get tighter, and realized that it had molded to fit his finger. Harry liked the ring, the blackness of the stone, but if he wore it, Dumbledore or another professor would be sure to recognize it as the old headmasters', so he put it back.

After placing the ring and parchment back into the box, he heard someone on the other side of the room cough, and turned quickly, stuffing the box and key into his robes, nervously. But no one was there. He was hoping it was just his nerves, but he had felt a presence the whole time he stood there. He walked rather quickly across the room and down the stairs, to find that Blaise was still asleep.

Harry put the box and key into his trunk, covering them with some of his other cloaks. When he closed the trunk, Harry looked up to see that Blaise was awake, and looking at him groggily.

"Morning," said Blaise, as he rubbed his eyes.

"Morning."

--

During breakfast, Harry had gotten another letter from Ron saying that he wanted to meet him tonight to go exploring around the castle. Ron had sent the letter with one of the school owls; an owl that kept biting his finger, probably thinking that it was food.

On the back Harry wrote:

Ron

Meet me in the Room of Buried Secrets at nine o'clock tonight. I think you remember how to get in. If you don't remember then just knock on the wall. I'll be waiting inside. I'll understand if you don't get there exactly on time from having to dodge professors. For now,

Harry

Harry sent the owl away, and by the time he did, his finger was starting to get red and had little bite marks all over it. Harry quickly glanced to his right to make sure Blaise hadn't seen what he had written.

--

Sunday morning had gone well. Harry and Blaise had played a couple games of Chess, but after a while Harry had gotten bored, so he decided he would just walk around the corridors of Hogwarts, thinking that maybe he would come across something of interest.

As he walked he thought of Hermione and Draco, wondering whether they were having a good time in Europe. His feet somehow brought him to the Owlry, and he looked out of the large window. Hedwig came up to him, thinking that she would be sending out a letter.

"Not today, Hedwig," said Harry.

Footsteps a couple minutes later, alerted Harry that someone was coming toward him. He turned around to see Professor Quirrel.

"Hello, Mr. P-Potter," said Quirrel. Quirrel looked around nervously as he approached. Harry noticed he had a letter in his right hand.

"Hello, Professor." Professor Quirrel looked up to see whether there were any school owls left, but there were none. Harry knew that they were all away sending letters to people that had left Hogwarts for the holidays.

"There a-aren't any o-owls left. C-could I b-borrow yours, Mr. P-Potter?" asked Professor Quirrel.

“Err... sure,” said Harry. Professor Quirrel came closer, and Harry’s scar started to throb with pain, but he did his best to ignore it. Harry saw that Hedwig was hesitant to have Professor Quirrel’s letter attached to her leg because she kept taking the twine off.

“Come on, Hedwig. It’s just a letter,” said Harry. She eventually complied and flew off.

“T-thanks,” whispered Professor Quirrel. As he turned around, Harry’s scar seared with pain. He knelt to the ground holding his hands to his scar. When the pain ceased, he looked up to see that Quirrel was gone, but couldn’t understand what had caused the pain.

--

Once it was a quarter to nine, Harry knew it was time to leave. Even though he had the Invisibility Cloak, he would still need time to make his way up the moving staircases without being heard. Blaise was busy playing Chess with an older student, so Harry knew he wouldn’t notice if he left.

Immediately after leaving the Common Room, Harry covered himself, so as to be seen by no one until he reached Ron. Making his way up the first two flights was easy. No professors, no Filch, no other students. Especially no other students, considering most were away.

As Harry got up to the third floor, he heard voices. Loud voices. Harry scanned the scene before him. Harry came just in time to see Professor Quirrel was standing at the wall in a frightful state, while Snape stood nearer to the middle of the corridor looking intimidating as always. Harry quickly checked his watch: five to nine.

“Dumbledore doesn’t think that your up to something, but I do. I’ll be watching your every move, Quirrel. Make sure you take the right steps, or you might just find yourself falling,” threatened Snape. He slowly moved closer while saying those words, so that when he said ‘falling’ he was right in Quirrel’s face.

With a quick snap of his cloak, he turned on his heel and came toward the direction of Harry. Luckily, he was covered by the cloak. Harry checked his watch: two minutes until nine. He looked at the

stairs to see Snape just turning the corner, and then turned to see that Quirrel was already gone.

..Five Minutes Later..

Harry closed the door to the Room of Buried Secrets, and turned around to see a frightened Ron. "Who's there? Show yourself!" said Ron, as stood with his wand out. He was looking in all directions, and pointing his wand all around.

Harry threw off the cloak quickly. "Its only me," said Harry. He bung the cloak onto the nearest couch, making only part of it visible.

"Bloody hell, Harry! You scared me," said Ron, putting his wand away in his cloak.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to."

"Is that an Invisibility Cloak?" asked Ron, as he went toward the cloak. He picked it up and felt it. "Blimey!"

"Yeah, it was a Christmas present. Great present, yeah?"

"I say! Who gave it to you?" asked Ron, as he pressed the fabric against his face.

"I don't know. The note didn't say," said Harry.

Ron put the cloak down and asked, "By the way, why were you late? Was Mrs. Norris around?"

"No, but as I saw the ending of a fight between Snape and Quirrel," said Harry, his body now resting on the lime green couch.

Ron sat on the navy blue one across from him, "Fighting? What were they fighting about?"

"Snape said that he thought Quirrel was up to something," said Harry.

"Up to something? What could *Quirrel* do? St-stuttering Professor Quirrel could never do anything wrong. It seems like he's always nervous about something," said Ron.

Harry shrugged his shoulders at what Ron had said, but then supposed, "What if he *is* nervous about something... or someone?"

"Like who?" asked Ron. Harry saw him lean closer and squint his eyes as he thought about it.

"Well, it always seems that he's scared of Snape, but then again that wouldn't make much sense if Snape thinks that Quirrel is the one that's up to something," said Harry. He paused for a second pondering what he had just said, but he saw that Ron was looking bored. "Never mind that. Lets go do some searching around the castle!"

"I thought you would never say that!" exclaimed Ron, as he jumped up excitedly. Ron grabbed the cloak, and put it over Harry and him before they exited the Room of Buried Secrets.

A/N: The chapters are going to move quicker now to get to the end of the first year. Enjoy!

"Believe only half of what you see and nothing that you hear."

-Dinah Mulock Craik

26

Blood and Foul

Harry and Ron left the Room of Buried Secrets covered by the Invisibility Cloak, and shuffled their way to the foot of the staircase. "Where should we go?" whispered Harry, as he looked down the stairs. No one was in view.

"Err... lets just go downstairs for now," said Ron. "I guess we can decide the rest later." They began walking down, trying not to make a lot of sound as their feet hit the marble.

"We're going to the third floor," said Harry as he realized where he was going.

Ron turned to look at him under the cloak. "Yeah, I know. What about it?"

"That's the floor with the Forbidden Corridor...and Fluffy," said Harry, as he turned to Ron.

"Oh. Lets avoid that corridor then."

"Yeah, I agree." When they finally reached the bottom, they decided to go to the left, and walked on for a couple minutes while whispering to each other. As they walked they heard a meow from behind.

Harry and Ron turned at the same time to see that it was Mrs. Norris. "Do you think she knows we're here?" whispered Ron.

"I'm not sure. Maybe she can smell us. Lets walk faster," said Harry. Ron nodded beside him, and they quickened their pace. Mrs. Norris soon turned into another corridor. As they kept walking, they came upon the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, and adjacent to it: the Defense Against the Dark Arts Office.

Harry saw that Professor Quirrel's office was slightly ajar. They shuffled to the door, and were going to open it when they heard Quirrel talking, completely forgetting they were under the Invisibility Cloak. Quirrel seemed to be at the other end of the room because his voice was almost inaudible.

"Yes, I know...I sent it out earlier today...No...No, there were no more school owls left...I used Potter's..." said Quirrel.

"Oh, yeah. Today, Quirrel needed to send a letter out and there were no more school owls, so he used mine," said Harry.

"...I'm sorry...I didn't know...But he'll get it in a few days...I told him the date...Yes, in a few months...I'll get the letter back soon..." said Quirrel. Harry and Ron had their ears close to the slightly open door, so they heard when Quirrel began walking toward them. They moved out of the way, and pressed their bodies against the wall, watching as he walked out and turned a corner.

Harry heard Ron exhale. "You know he can't see us, right?" asked Harry, slightly making fun of him, but in a joking manner.

"Yeah. Of course I knew that...well, you went against the wall, too!" said Ron, a little embarrassed.

"Shh. I know. I was only joking," said Harry, looking down the corridor.

"Harry, who was Quirrel talking to?"

"Good question. Let's see who's in the room still." Harry pushed open the door, so that it swung inward. The light was dim because there were only a few candles lit, but they could clearly see that no one else was in the room.

"Odd," whispered Harry.

"Yeah."

--

The holidays ended, and Draco and Hermione came back from Europe, both with a story to tell. Draco told Harry all he had seen in Europe, and later that night he got a letter from Hermione explaining all the family she had seen. Harry also told Draco about the wonderful cloak he had received.

It was more than a week since Harry had sent Hedwig for Professor Quirrel. *She's taking a really long time to send a letter. But then again I don't know where Quirrel sent her. I just hope she comes back soon.*

But she didn't. Harry had already started classes again, and Hedwig still hadn't come back. Harry was beginning to get worried.

It was about two weeks later on a Friday, when Hedwig finally came back. Harry was sitting eating breakfast with Draco, who was still going on about how he had gone to Europe, when Hedwig finally arrived. Harry saw her fly to Quirrel, and then make her way to the Slytherin table.

When she got to the table she collapsed, and Harry saw that she was bloody and clawed up. "Harry, what happened to your owl?" asked Draco in shock. Harry, too worried to reply, stood up and picked up Hedwig carefully in his arms. Other students in the Great Hall had seen Hedwig, and now watched as he quickly walked out to the Hospital Wing.

Madam Pomfrey told Harry that she would be fine in a few days and that he should go to class to take his mind off Hedwig. But Harry remembered that the class he had was Double Potions, and suddenly didn't think going to class would help.

Luckily, the class went fairly quickly, and the other students began to exit for their next class. "Harry, we'll see you at dinner," said Draco, before leaving with Blaise, Crabbe, and Goyle. Harry nodded and gave them a quick glance before turning to his still full cauldron.

"Still here, Potter?" asked Snape nastily. Snape came over from his desk, and with a quick flick of his wand, the contents of the cauldron were gone. Harry watched as he turned quickly, his cloak flying behind him and sat behind his desk.

Snape hates Quirrel, and its obvious Quirrel fears Snape. Was it Snape that made Quirrel send a letter away? I know he could persuade Quirrel to do something bad for him. And now Hedwig is...

Harry was brought out of his thoughts by Snape speaking to him. "You may leave now, Potter. I have a class coming before long." Snape said in a unemotional tone.

Harry picked up his bag, and walked over to Snape's desk. Snape had been writing, and looked up only when Harry said, "Professor, did you ask Professor Quirrel to send a letter for you to somewhere... dangerous?"

"Why would I ask *Quirrel* to send a letter for myself? Especially to a place of a dangerous nature?" asked Snape, as his cold eyes looked piercingly at Harry.

"Err... I'm not sure, Professor," said Harry, slowly. "But Professor Quirrel asked me to send a letter with my owl, and today Hedwig came back bloody and with scratches on her."

"No, I never told Quirrel to send a letter," said Snape, not bothering to look up. Harry nodded more to himself than to Snape, and then began to walk away when Snape spoke again. "What did the scratches look like?"

"Err... well, they were deep... and it kind of looked like Hedwig had been clawed at," said Harry, turning to look at Snape.

"One more thing, Potter. How long was your owl away?" asked Snape. The door to the Potion's classroom creaked open, allowing fourth years to enter.

"About two weeks," said Harry, before turning to finally leave. It didn't matter if he was late for the next class because, luckily, he didn't have a next class. *Might as well do some work.*

--

Harry passed the rest of the day by doing work that he hadn't finished the day before, and by thinking of Hedwig. After dinner, he had gotten

a letter from Ron and Hermione saying that they had seen Hedwig come in during breakfast, and that they hoped she was okay. Harry sent a reply back saying that he had hurried to the Hospital Wing and that Madam Pomfrey said that Hedwig would be fine in a couple days.

As the night neared and the day came to an end, Draco and Blaise decided they would go to sleep earlier since the day had been long, and Harry agreed, but he knew he wouldn't be able to sleep with so much on his mind.

So he decided to get his Invisibility Cloak and just go for a walk around. Not that it would help take his mind off Hedwig and what had happened to her, but he needed to walk to calm down a little before sleeping.

It was after hours when he walked around, so he knew he wouldn't have to make sure he didn't walk into any other students, but he would have to look for teachers. He walked around aimlessly for about a half hour before he got to the second floor, and heard voices. Loud voices that sounded familiar.

Harry turned a corner to see Quirrel on the ground and Snape standing over him, his wand pointing at Quirrel's chest.

"Where did you send Potter's owl?" asked Snape, menacingly. Snape paused, waiting for Quirrel to say something, but he didn't say a word. "ANSWER ME!"

"I d-didn't send his l-letter anywhere," said Quirrel.

"You sent it somewhere! Potter told me his owl came back clawed and bloody. I know you know where you sent that owl. Where did you send it?" asked Snape, his voice just above a whisper, but it was as if he was yelling. Harry saw that he was getting irritated, and fast.

Snape continued, "I don't trust you. I've been watching everything you do. I told you to watch your step, and now your starting to fall. I know it was you at the Quidditch game. Why, I don't know. But you can be sure that I'll be keeping a closer eye on you. I know all kinds of spells, Quirrel. Remember that."

Snape quickly pocketed his wand, gave Quirrel a sudden threatening look, and walked away. Once Snape was out of sight, Quirrel got up slowly, dusting off his robes when he finally stood. Harry saw him stand there for a second before he finally walked away in the opposite direction Snape had gone.

"I have to tell Draco, Ron, and Hermione about this!" Harry whispered to himself under the cloak. He checked his watch; it was just after ten thirty. "I can tell Draco anytime, but Ron and Hermione might not still be awake! Where is the Gryffindor Common Room, anyway?"

Harry knew that they were on the higher levels from seeing them come down to breakfast and dinner, so he guessed the sixth or seventh floor. He decided he'd try top to bottom, so he made his way to the seventh floor.

When he got there he decided to try knocking on all the blank walls, seeing that he didn't know the password, hoping that someone would hear him. Seeing that it was difficult doing this under a cloak, Harry decided to risk being caught, and took off the cloak. He made the cloak invisible and put it on the floor behind a suit of armor.

As he kept knocking on the wall, he accidentally knocked on a painting of a fat lady, and woke her up. "What do you...? Oh. Password?"

"I don't know the password, but I need to speak to Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Can I go in?"

"Not unless you have the password," said the Fat Lady.

"But I..." Harry began knocking on the wall next to the painting of the Fat Lady, so that someone could open it for him. "...Just need to get in."

Luckily enough for Harry, someone did push open the painting. He took two steps back and looked around the frame. Though he knew it wouldn't be Ron or Hermione, Harry wasn't expecting it to be...

A/N: Oooo! Who is it? And I hope you realized that Quirrel wasn't stuttering. Don't worry; Harry will realize it in time.

Preview of Chapter 27--Questionable Circumstances:

Harry gets a letter from Ron and Hermione, but runs into a problem in the form of a man named Snape...

“Through pride we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, ‘Something is out of tune.’”

-Carl Jung

27

Questionable Circumstances

Luckily enough for Harry, someone did push open the painting. He took two steps back and looked around the frame. Though he knew it wouldn't be Ron or Hermione, Harry wasn't expecting it to be...

Neville Longbottom. His chubby face peered out from around the frame. “What are you doing here? You don't belong here,” said Longbottom nervously. Harry knew that Longbottom was afraid of him. His fingers were around the edge of the frame tightly, as he looked out at Harry with suspicion.

“I just need to talk to Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Are they around?”

“Yeah, but...” said Longbottom, somewhat nervous about what to do. Harry saw him look quickly back into the Common Room. “I don't think I should let you in.”

“I'm not going to do anything, if that's what your thinking. I just want to talk to them.” Longbottom hesitated, but then he went back in to get Ron and Hermione.

The opening was still ajar, so Harry saw the Gryffindor Common Room: the bright reds that colored the couches, lamps, and almost everything else in the room. There was an amazing fire in the corner of the room and a couple windows to see the snow that was falling lightly outside.

As he looked through the opening, Harry saw Longbottom walk to the two chairs near the fire, where Ron and Hermione were sitting. He couldn't hear what they were saying because they were so far, but after a moment Ron and Hermione nodded. He saw Ron look to the

opening where he stood. Hermione reached into her bag and retrieved a piece of parchment and the white quill; one of which he had.

Longbottom took a couple steps back, his hands at his sides. Ron and Hermione leaned closer toward the parchment, as she wrote something down. In a couple seconds they were done, and Harry saw Hermione fold the parchment twice.

Ron and Hermione got up and Longbottom moved toward them. Hermione motioned for Longbottom to lean closer and she whispered something into his ear. When they moved further apart, Longbottom nodded and Hermione handed him the letter.

His short, somewhat pudgy body made his way back towards the opening in a rushed manner. When he got to Harry he pushed the painting out more, but not a considerable amount more; just enough to give Harry the letter and a few words.

“Hermione told me not to tell anyone about you all being friends. So, don’t worry, I won’t. I promise,” said Longbottom, as he handed Harry the letter.

“Thanks for this and for promising not to tell anyone.”

Longbottom nodded, more to himself than to Harry and then grabbed the painting, bringing it toward the wall.

“Got what you needed, I presume?” asked the Fat Lady. Harry nodded as he looked at the letter in his hands. He took a couple steps away from the Fat Lady, as he unfolded the letter to find out what Hermione and Ron had written.

Harry,

Sorry, but you shouldn’t visit us at Gryffindor Tower. If people see us talking to you too much, they are going to think something is up, and the other Gryffindors might not trust us anymore. I know that you wouldn’t want us to go to the Slytherin Common Room, and have all your friends see us; it’s the same on both sides. Anyway, when I finish writing this I’m going to tell Neville to give this to you, and that

he can never tell anyone that we are all friends. It's depressing that we have to hide it though. Maybe in the future that will change. Write us back,

Hermione & Ron

Harry read the letter over again, walking slowly back to the Invisibility Cloak. “ ‘The same on both sides.’ I guess so,” whispered Harry to himself.

“Lost your way?” asked someone sarcastically. Harry looked up from the parchment to see an irritated Snape standing a couple feet in front of him. “What, may I ask, are you doing all the way up here so far from the Dungeons... after hours?”

“Err... oh. I was sleep walking, Professor,” said Harry, before rubbing his eyes. He brought his hands away from his face to see that Snape was closer now. His face clearly showed that he didn’t believe a word Harry had said.

“You’re up here for a reason, Potter. Don’t be smart with me. Give me that parchment,” said Snape forcibly, as he held out his palm. Harry folded the parchment, but looked at Snape’s hand hesitantly. He then remembered that only the person intended to read the words, can.

Harry placed it in Snape’s hand, and watched silently as he unfolded it and a suspicious look appeared on his face. Snape’s eyes look up at Harry. “What does this say? I know there are words on it.” He said it more to himself than to Harry.

When Harry saw Snape reach into his pocket to get his wand, he took a step back. Snape tapped his wand against the parchment three times and said, “*Aparecium!*”

Harry watched as Snape glanced at the parchment. From the look on his face, Harry could tell that nothing had shown up on the parchment. Snape looked to Harry suspiciously, but then his eyes move to look behind Harry. Harry got the urge to turn around, but resisted it. “Do you know what’s behind you?”

Snape's eyes looked at him penetratingly as Harry said slowly, "No, Professor."

There was a pause before Snape said, "Start walking."

Harry walked past the suit of armor where the Invisibility Cloak was hiding. He knew he'd have to come back to get it, but seeing as he was going to be getting the cloak, he wouldn't have protection from professors. Snape was walking behind him, probably keeping an eye on him to make sure he didn't go off somewhere else in the castle.

"Hmm..." said Snape loudly. Harry turned behind him to look at Snape: his right hand was massaging his chin. "I'm just thinking when I should give you detention, Potter. Curious as to when is it, are you?"

"Curious, yes. Are you going to take off points?" asked Harry, as he slowed a little to walk next to Snape. Snape gave him a blank look. "Professor."

"No because, *unfortunately*, you're in my House. But if I catch you walking the corridors again, I might just consider it."

They walked in silence until they got to the third floor, where Harry began thinking of Hedwig, and of how she got the scratches. "Professor, I was thinking about Hedwig, my owl, do you have any idea as to how she could have gotten those scratches?"

"No. Quirrel didn't say anything. As of now, don't worry about it." Snape didn't even turn to talk to Harry; he just looked straight ahead.

"But, Professor, she's in the Hospital Wing. She barely made it to the High Table to give Professor Quirrel his letter—" said Harry, troubled by Snape's words.

Suddenly Snape turned to face him. Harry stopped in his tracks. "Your owl gave Quirrel a letter?" he asked quickly, looking Harry directly in the eye.

Harry looked at him closely before answering. Snape's eyes didn't look menacing, which was odd to Harry, but troubled. "Yes, this morning when she came back," said Harry slowly. Snape turned back,

contemplating something as he began walking again and Harry followed.

They kept walking toward the stairs to get down to the second floor, but came across Quirrel's office first. Snape stopped at the door, but then turned to Harry with a mischievous look in his eye. Harry stood there and narrowed his eyes, wondering what Snape was thinking.

"Potter, if you please," said Snape, as he nodded his head toward his direction. Harry walked toward him. Snape lowered his voice, "Go into Quirrel's office and tell me if it happens to be empty."

"What if it's not? What if he's in there?"

Snape didn't answer, but opened the door so it lay ajar to allow Harry in. He looked at Snape for a second, but when Snape did nothing, he decided to go in. Snape closed the door behind him.

Harry walked in and immediately saw that there was no one in the room, but chose to look around before going back to tell Snape. The room was incredibly dim from lack of candles, chillingly cold from no heat, and felt strangely secluded. Harry saw Quirrel's desk, and walked toward it. He knew that Snape wanted the letter, but he wanted to find it first.

There was nothing of interest on the top of Quirrel's desk, but a stack of homework from students, a quill, and a bottle of ink. Harry tried the drawers, but they wouldn't open. "Oh, right." He pulled out his wand, pointing it at the first drawer and murmured, "*Alohomora*." The lock clicked.

Harry looked through all the drawers, but there were no letters in sight. Harry sighed, as he looked around the room. Behind him was a regular wooden chair, but laid messily upon it was a cloak. Harry picked it and searched the pockets. He put his hand into the right pocket, and found the letter.

Upon placing the cloak back down on the chair, he heard a knocking at the door and it opened before he could hide the letter. Snape came in, leaving the door slightly open. Harry held up the letter. "Found what you wanted," said Harry with a smirk.

"Give it to me, Potter. I should have known you would go prying," said Snape.

"No, this letter is what got Hedwig hurt. I'm reading it," said Harry, as he turned his back to Snape. He unfolded the letter.

"Give me the letter, Potter!" Harry heard Snape rush toward him.

"No!" Harry tried to focus on the letter, but because Snape kept trying to grab it, so he couldn't. "Just let me read it!"

Snape stopped trying to get the letter, and stepped back. He pulled out his wand and called, "*Accio Letter!*" The letter tugged at Harry's fingertips, but he couldn't keep hold of it and it slipped away. As it did, Harry quickly turned to Snape, who had been standing behind him.

"Why can't I read it! I deserve to read it!" said Harry, upset.

Snape stood before him, laughing now, as he held the letter. "You *deserve* to read this? Your petty wants are nothing. But if it will make you feel the *tinies*t bit better," said Snape mockingly. Snape held the letter out to him.

Harry was confused now as to why he was letting him read it now and not before, but he realized Snape was playing with him. He grabbed the letter quickly and unfolded it once more. It read...

Quirrel,

For Him, yes. Just be warned that people might be harmed. If you feel no guilt, than neither do I. I will be there on the day you mentioned. I won't be late I swear to you that.

G.

Harry refolded the letter. *I don't think Snape has any idea what is in this letter. Because I know he wouldn't have let me read it.* "Pleased?" asked Snape. Harry turned to see that he was looking through Quirrel's desk.

Harry gave him a look. "I think you should read it." Harry handed him the letter. When Snape looked back up, Harry asked, "Who's G?"

"Go down to the Dungeons. Mind you, taking any detours will lead you to having detention for a month," said Snape. Harry saw that Snape had a scared look on his face, which he tried to hide.

"But—"

"Go down...to the Dungeons...now!" said Snape fiercely.

Harry stood there looking at Snape, but then turned and walked out, closing the door behind him. Just as he turned the corner, he heard footsteps just where he had been less than a second before. He looked around the corner, and saw Quirrel opening the door to his office.

Harry would have wanted to stay and listen, but he didn't have his Invisibility Cloak to cover him, and choose to keep walking all the way down to the Slytherin Common Room.

A/N: Did you figure out who G is? Tell me if you do. I was hoping it would be a little difficult to figure out, though. Thanks for reading!

Preview for Chapter 28--Talk About Letters:

A meeting with Ron, Hermione, and Hagrid get Harry nowhere with the infamous "G," but Harry goes to detention with Snape in the Forbidden Forest, and there's something there that shouldn't be...

“The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.”

-FDR

28

Talk About Letters

Before any of the nights events faded into just a memory, Harry decided to tell it all to Ron and Hermione. He wrote them a letter, telling them about what happened after Longbottom had given him the letter from them.

He also asked them who they thought “G” was. He knew that they wouldn’t have a clue, but he thought to ask anyway. And told them to meet him at Hagrid’s tomorrow after lunch.

--

Harry awoke to see that there was no one in the dormitory, but him. He sat up on his bed and stretched, raising his arms into the air. A long yawn escaped his mouth, before he left his bed and put on his cloak. He was about to leave the dormitory when he realized he forgot something: his glasses, which were still on his side table.

When he got to the Great Hall, he found it full of sleepy students. “Thought you’d never wake up,” said Blaise.

Harry yawned again as he sat next to Blaise, facing the rest of the Great Hall. “I’m up. Didn’t get a lot of sleep,” said Harry. He saw Draco was looking at him curiously. “Worried about Hedwig.” He saw Draco and Blaise nod at his reply.

After filling up on eggs and bacon, he looked up to the Staff Table. There was no Snape, but there was Quirrel and something purple-ish on his face.

Harry did a double take. He squinted at Professor Quirrel to see that his left eye was black and blue, like someone had punched him.

Harry immediately knew it was Snape. He pointed Quirrel's black eye out to Draco, Blaise, Crabbe, and Goyle.

"Nice! I wonder who did it. I'd like to congratulate them," said Draco, a smile on his face. Crabbe and Goyle laughed. Blaise stood up to get a better look at Quirrel.

After more discussions of Quirrel and his black eye, they went to the Common Room. Blaise found some other students to talk to about Quirrel, while Crabbe and Goyle sat eating some more food. Since the others were occupied, Harry thought that this would be the best time to tell Draco about what happened last night.

Harry brought Draco over to a corner, and then told him everything. Of course, Harry left out the part about going to Ron and Hermione. Draco's face lit up with curiosity.

"Who's G?" asked Draco.

"I don't know. I asked Snape, but he wouldn't tell me. I don't know what's going to happen and when, but it said that people would be harmed," said Harry. "Snape looked... oddly enough, scared after reading it."

"Scared?"

"Scared," said Harry as he nodded. "I'm guessing he knows who G is."

"But what happened after that? Quirrel has a black eye now."

"Snape told me to leave. But I saw Quirrel go into his office, right after I left. I'm guessing they fought."

"Hmm..." said Draco. Harry nodded and sat back in a nearby armchair. Draco sat down, as well.

--

The time before lunch was spent watching Harry practice for Quidditch with the rest of the team. After which, they went to eat lunch.

When Harry was done, he got up from the table to see that Ron and Hermione rose, as well. He could tell that they had waited for him to get up before they had. Crabbe and Goyle were still consuming as much food as they could, while Draco and Blaise spoke with a couple older students.

Silently, Harry left the Slytherin table. He met with Hermione and Ron outside in the Entrance Hall, and they made their way to Hagrid's.

"Got your letter," said Ron.

"Apparently," said Harry. He quickly checked behind him to make sure no one was following them. "So, do have any idea who G is?" The question was more for Hermione.

"Sorry, no," said Hermione, shaking her head.

"It's fine. But that letter is bad news. As far as I can tell, anyway," said Harry. They walked for a couple minutes in silence until they were in front of Hagrid's door. Harry stepped forward and knocked on it three times in succession.

Loud footsteps could be heard on the other side of the door before it was opened. "Hello, yeh three," said Hagrid excitedly. "Come in. Makin' some tea n' cake. Want some?"

"Just tea," said Hermione, as she sat down on a large seat.

"Me, too," said Harry and Ron in unison. They too sat down.

After Hagrid had gone to retrieve his tea, Hermione lowered her voice to ask, "What was in the letter that made it so awful?" Ron leaned in closer to hear.

"It said that people would get hurt," said Harry.

"When?" asked Ron.

"It didn't say," said Harry, turning to Ron and then Hermione. He racked his brains for the words. Luckily, the letter had been short and he repeated the words, " 'For Him, yes. Just be warned that people might be harmed. If you feel no guilt, than neither do I. I will be there on the day you mentioned. I won't be late I swear to you that. G.'"

"What's that, Harry?" asked Hagrid, bring over a tray of tea.

"Nothing," said Harry quickly.

Hagrid sat down on another big chair and grabbed his cup of tea, taking a long sip. Harry, Ron, and Hermione watched as he did so. When Hagrid put the cup down he went on, "So, yeh three, what 'ave yeh been up ter?"

They all looked to each other before Hermione responded, "The usual: work, work, and more work."

"Speak for yourself," said Ron. Harry saw Ron look to Hermione and then drink from his cup.

"What abou' yeh, Harry?" asked Hagrid, turning to him. "Anythin' new?"

"Err...no, not really. I just have lots of work, boring classes, Quidditch practice, and mean teachers. What about you, Hagrid?"

"Nothin' new here. Oh, Harry, I heard abou' yer owl. Is she okay?" asked Hagrid.

"She should be in a couple days."

"How did she get like that?" asked Hagrid, sipping more tea.

Harry said, "She sent a letter for Professor Quirrel," before taking a sip from his own cup.

"How would Hedwig get like that by sending a letter?" asked Ron.

"Hedwig must've been sent somewhere dangerous, Ron," said Hermione. "She wouldn't be hurt just out of the blue." Ron nodded.

“Who did Quirrel send the letter teh?” asked Hagrid.

Harry shook his head. “I don’t know. I didn’t see the name. I only know that either his first or last name begins with the letter G.”

“Do you know anyone it could be, Hagrid?” asked Hermione.

There was a pause before Hagrid said that he didn’t know any, but would keep it in mind. “Haven’ gone on any late nigh’ journey’s ‘ave yeh? Harry. Ron. Hermione.” He looked at them each as he said their names.

“No. What would make you say that?” said Ron.

“Don’ want yeh, mates, getting’ into any trouble. That’s all,” said Hagrid. He turned to Harry. “Like that nigh’ when yeh went into that *forbidden* corridor on the third floor. Yeh could’ve gotten into serious trouble, Harry. What if yeh had been seen?”

“Well, I wasn’t and that’s all that matters now. It was in the beginning of the year. Let’s not dwell on it,” said Harry.

Ron turned to Hagrid. “So... how’s Fluffy?”

Hagrid turned to him. “How do yeh know abou’ Fluffy?”

“Harry told us,” said Ron. Harry saw Hagrid give him a look.

Hagrid exhaled loudly before saying, “Fluffy doesn’ like being cooped up in that room. But he’s gotten used teh it, since its been abou’ five months.”

“Five months? You mean, he’s only been here since September?” asked Hermione, leaning forward.

“O’ course. There was no reason for him teh be ‘ere before then. He’s—never mind,” said Hagrid quickly.

There was a sharp intake of breath from Hermione and she jumped up from her chair. “Fluffy is guarding the Sorcerer’s Stone!”

“I never said that!” exclaimed Hagrid.

"Maybe not, but that's what you were going to say," said Hermione with a smile.

They weren't at Hagrid's much longer, but after they had left Harry remembered that he left his Invisibility Cloak behind the statue of armor. Ron and Hermione told him they would get it and bring it to him when they saw him. But it didn't take long; they immediately went to retrieve it for him.

--

The cold, damp dungeon of Snape's office made Harry think about how just hours ago, he had been sitting in Hagrid's hut with Ron and Hermione. Now, he was waiting for his detention with Snape.

"Come on," said Snape unemotionally. He was standing near the doorway. Harry walked over and once he had gone through, Snape took out his wand. He flicked it into the room and all the candles went out like there had been a gust of wind.

A couple minutes later they were outside the Forbidden Forest. Snape kept walking toward it whereas Harry had stopped. "Are we going in there?" asked Harry in shock. He could see the breath before him since it was so cold.

"I need more Bruisewort; a plant. And *you're* going to help me find it," said Snape. Harry saw him look into the forest. "Just stay close." Snape said the latter irritably, not wanting Harry to be near him.

The Forbidden Forest got darker and colder as they walked further in from the dense trees that were blocking the moonlight. Harry could hear what sounded like an owl hooting nearby. But every time he heard it, he flinched since he knew there were dangerous animals in the forest.

Harry had been following Snape the whole time they were in the forest. "Are we there yet?" asked Harry, shivering slightly. He chuckled after saying that, knowing that he sounded like some small child from a movie.

At first Snape said nothing. "We'll be there soon."

“Doesn’t seem like it,” said Harry to himself. He was looking up trying to see that sky, but the trees were so close together.

Apparently, Snape had heard what Harry had muttered to himself because he turned to Harry. “Don’t get smart with me, Potter. Wouldn’t want me to *accidentally* leave you in the Forbidden Forest, now would you?”

Harry stood there looking at Snape nastily, but decided to say nothing. Snape didn’t seem like he was joking and Harry wouldn’t want to actually be left there. He didn’t know the way back.

After a couple minutes, which Harry thought Snape had needed to calm down, he decided it was acceptable to ask, “How long have we been in here?”

Snape looked up and Harry followed his gaze. There was a small opening between the trees, which showed part of the moon and some stars. “About an hour,” said Snape. They walked past a couple wide trees and Snape called to him, “Just past these trees.”

In the trees, Harry heard the sound of the owl-like animal and hurried after Snape. Once he got to where Snape was, he saw that there was a large gap. Instead of trees there were tall bushes and Harry could make out flowers on them.

They got to one of the bushes and Snape told him, “Collect the leaves that look like this.” Snape pulled off a fairly round leaf and showed it to him. “Don’t take the flowers, they serve no purpose.”

Snape moved over to another bush and started collecting them, putting them in his pocket as he took them off. Harry turned back to the bush to see tons of the purple flowers, but moved them aside to get to the leaves.

After what seemed like hours and Harry’s pockets were practically full of leaves, he heard a inhuman shriek. It was so silent and still in the Forbidden Forest that he heard it with chilling clarity. Harry heard the sound again, which was louder this time.

What ever had made that sound didn't seem far off. Harry didn't have to walk far to see a cloaked figure a few away feasting on a unicorn. At first, seeing the hooded being drinking in a silvery liquid of a dying unicorn, he gasped out loud.

Cold fingers covered Harry's mouth and he was pulled to the ground behind a couple bushes. He pulled away but saw Snape giving him a threatening look, telling him to shut up. Through a small gap in the leaves, Harry could see that the cloaked figure had turned to see what had caused the noise. The face was covered in darkness except for red eyes.

For a long, heart-pounding second, Harry thought the figure had seen him. He could have sworn the red eyes had looked directly into his, but the man turned back to the beautiful animal before him. The unicorn let out a shrill cry before allowing his head to finally rest on the ground.

Beside him, Snape whispered, "Him." Since it was so cold, Snape's words turned into a small cloud in front his face before disappearing. Harry was going to ask 'who,' but the figure on the other side of the bushes stood up. There was a harsh, piercing laugh from the cloaked figure before he seemed to have flown away in the cold wind.

"We have to get back to Hogwarts," said Snape simply as he stood up. He didn't look at Harry as he walked away.

"Who was that?" Harry asked, hurrying after Snape.

Snape didn't answer at first. The only sound was the branches underfoot as Harry's feet crushed them. He looked at the ground, trying not to trip on the thick roots from the trees.

"The Dark Lord," Snape stated.

Harry looked up. Snape was standing in front of him, so all Harry could see was his back. "*That* was Voldemort!" Harry asked more to himself. He paused for a second; thinking about the fact that Voldemort was here in the Forbidden Forest...near Hogwarts, which meant that he was near him.

"Don't say his name!" Snape said as he turned to him. Harry stopped walking, and then Snape turned away.

They walked for a while. Harry listened as he stepped on branches that lay on the ground. He looked up at Snape. "Why was he drinking unicorn blood?" Snape turned to his head slightly in Harry's direction. "Professor," Harry added.

"To stay alive, presumably. But it's a vile thing to do, drinking unicorns' blood. He'll never be the same. He'll have a cursed life."

--

More than an hour passed and they finally exited the Forbidden Forest. Instead of turning toward the castle, Snape turned in the direction of Hagrid's cabin. All Harry wanted to do was give Snape his Bruisewort leaves and be in his warm bed. But seeing Hagrid for a couple minutes wouldn't hurt.

"Hullo, Snape," said Hagrid, not too pleasantly. He looked further out of his door to see Harry standing there. "Harry. Haven't gotten into trouble, 'ave yeh?" Hagrid narrowed his eyes as he surveyed Harry and Snape.

"Err...no, not really," said Harry.

"Forget the pleasantries. There's a unicorn in the Forbidden Forest that has been killed. More will most likely turn up that way if we don't do anything," said Snape coldly.

"Who would...? Oh," Hagrid said. Hagrid nodded agreeably before he walked into his house quickly and came back with a cross bow in hand. "I'll search for those unicorns. See yeh in the mornin'."

When Harry had finally gotten into his pajamas and was covering himself in his blanket, he couldn't help but think about how Voldemort was in the forest. Harry was relieved to be out of the cold and wind, and away from Snape. Harry took off his glasses and then placed his head against the soft pillow, staring at the ceiling. It was a while before he managed to fall asleep for the night.

A/N: Next chapter is going to move forward four months, just to tell you now. This chapter takes place in January whereas Chapter 29 will take place at the end of May. Hope this chapter was to your liking.

“Fear is an emotion indispensable for survival.”

-Hannah Arendt

29

A Disturbance

The months past, none too quickly though for Harry. There was lots of work given by the professors, way too many long and tedious classes, and Snape, who never failed to make his life miserable.

Luckily, there had been Quidditch to ease Harry. The Slytherin team had won all the Quidditch matches, thanks to Harry's unbelievable quickness on a broom.

The weather had gotten better after March. The dreariness of winter left to become the fresh and gentle spring. Flowers could be found around the castle, planted by Professor Sprout. The Black Lake's water was no longer black looking, but a deep blue that glistened in the sunlight. Sunlight became an everyday thing, as well.

And as it was now the end of May, it was beginning to get warmer. Students could be seen with cloaks now stuffed into their bags, revealing white collared shirts and open ties.

Back in January, Hedwig had been restored back to health by Madam Pomfrey. And only two days later she was flying happily around.

And after that wonderful detention with Snape in January, Harry had told Draco, Ron and Hermione about it and how they had seen Voldemort in the forest. Their reactions had been exactly what he expected: shock.

Lately, Harry had been thinking a lot about the letter that had been sent by Professor Quirrel to some unknown person and wondered why Snape had been so upset by it. He had heard Snape accuse of Quirrel of being up to something, but what would Quirrel do? Quirrel was afraid of Snape and Harry knew that; everyone knew that. But that didn't solve the problem as to why Snape was so worried about the letter.

Maybe it has something to do with G. Whoever that person is. I don't think Snape likes this person. And the letter said that people might get hurt when he or she comes to the school. Just thinking about it made Harry uneasy, knowing that sometime before the end of school, something bad might happen. And the end of the school year was fast approaching.

Harry was walking around the Black Lake. It was Saturday, so he didn't have any classes and it was right after lunch. Crabbe and Goyle, he knew, were still in the Great Hall pigging out. Draco was probably in the Slytherin Common Room with Blaise. Harry sat at the edge near the water.

A while back, Hermione had the idea that Snape was making Quirrel do errands for him, but hadn't wanted Quirrel to send off that letter for some reason. She also thought, since Harry's scar only seems to hurt in Defense Against the Dark Arts, that maybe Snape was making Quirrel hurt Harry.

Harry knew that Hermione's ideas could very much be true. Snape hated him, so it seemed likely that he would want to hurt Harry. He already tried to cause some damage at the first Quidditch match.

A cloud overhead covered the sun, so the Black Lake no longer sparkled. Someone from behind him called loudly, "Harry!" He turned to see Draco running toward him with a letter in his hand.

Harry stood up when Draco stood before him. "I got a letter from my father."

Harry looked at Draco oddly. "So? Don't you get letters from your father all the time?"

Draco nodded his head, but was still breathing hard from having ran. After finally catching his breath he said, "Yeah, well, he says he doesn't want me to go to dinner tonight."

"Why?" asked Harry.

"He says...just look," said Draco annoyed, handing him the letter.

Draco, I can't write much as I am very busy at the moment. Snape told me how you're doing in his class. I don't want you going to the Great Hall tonight, I want you in the Common Room studying. I better not find out that you had dinner tonight.

"Don't listen to him. He's not here," said Harry. He folded the letter and gave it back.

Draco looked at him. "You really thought I was going to listen to my father? I know Snape is going to tell him, but I'll worry about that later."

On the way back to the Common Room, they came across Professor Quirrel in the Entrance Hall. Even though they were walking towards each other, Quirrel didn't seem to notice them. He was looking straight ahead as he walked awkwardly on.

Harry heard him muttering, "Last chance. My last chance."

When Quirrel had passed, Harry turned to Draco. "I think Snape is making Quirrel do something tonight. Something bad," said Harry in whisper.

"Seriously, Harry. He could be talking about something *completely* different, besides what could Quirrel do?"

"I don't kn—" said Harry. He breathed in sharply, realizing something. "The stone!"

"You think that Quirrel is going to steal the stone for Snape?" asked Draco.

"You know how he's afraid of Snape. Everyone knows. He probably scared Quirrel into doing it for him," said Harry.

"But then why would Snape want it? Why would he want to steal it?" Draco asked.

There was a pause before Harry thought of something. "The Sorcerer's Stone makes a person immortal...it could be that Snape wants to be immortal."

Draco shook his head. "Doubt it. I know Snape, or at least my family does, and he doesn't seem the type to want to be immortal."

"He's got to be stealing it for something. Or... someone," said Harry coming to a realization.

"Who?" asked Draco, leaning in closer.

"Voldemort."

--

Hours past on that beautiful Saturday. Harry and Draco were in the Common Room, lying on the couches. They had both been sitting there for a while. Harry looked up at Draco, to see that he was narrowing his eyes at the floor.

"You okay?" asked Harry, still watching Draco.

"I was just thinking..." said Draco. He lowered his voice and continued, "If you think that Quirrel is going to steal the stone for Snape, then we should be ready to stop Quirrel. Once he gives the stone to Snape, Snape'll give it to You-Know-Who. It doesn't seem like a good thing for You-Know-Who to be immortal. Bring your Invisibility Cloak to dinner tonight."

Harry nodded and they continued thinking about stopping Snape.

--

"Come on, Harry! Dinner!" called Blaise, right before he slipped out of the Common Room.

Harry quickly ran down to the dormitory and grabbed his Invisibility Cloak from his trunk, stuffing it into his pocket. It made his pocket bulge, but he didn't think anyone would notice.

Once he got to the Great Hall, he saw that it was nearly full of students. He got to the Slytherin table and sat down next to Crabbe, putting soup into a bowl. Beside him he could hear Crabbe chomping away. On his left, Harry saw Draco looking at the Staff Table.

"I don't think Snape has seen me yet," said Draco. "But he will and then he'll tell my father."

Harry looked to the Staff Table. All the teachers were there except... "Where's Dumbledore?" asked Harry, looking at the others at the table to get an answer.

Draco, food in his mouth, just shrugged. Blaise, after taking a huge gulp said, "I heard McGonagall say that he left this morning due to something at the Ministry of Magic."

After some time, Harry saw Quirrel get up from his seat. He nudged Draco in the arm and he looked up, too. Snape, Harry saw, was also watching as Quirrel left the Great Hall.

"Do you think...?" whispered Draco. Harry shrugged his shoulders.

He knew that Draco was going to ask: Do you think he's going to steal the stone. But for some reason, Harry didn't think he would do it right now. Besides, everyone had just seen him leave the Great Hall. They would know it was him.

Less than a minute later, Quirrel opened the door to the Great Hall, and came running in with a crazed look on his face. "WEREWOLF! WEREWOLF ON THE GROUNDS!" yelled Quirrel, after which he fainted and fell onto the ground.

There was a split second where no one said anything. It was complete and utter silence. But then the Great Hall became a place of pandemonium. Tons of students were now screaming and running around. The professors were also running around trying to calm the students, but it wasn't worth it. Everyone was too scared, knowing that somewhere on the Hogwarts grounds, there was a ravaging werewolf.

It didn't help when the closed Great Hall doors were banged into by something that sounded large and fierce. Everyone heard it, and the room fell silent. But it was a different silence than before. Especially since it wasn't a complete silence; some students, mostly girls, could be heard sobbing or whimpering.

Harry had stayed against the wall with Draco, watching as the chaos unfolded. He turned to Draco, who was paler than usual. Harry grabbed Draco's shoulder to calm him, but he knew it wouldn't help at all.

Suddenly, the doors burst open and a large gray werewolf stood there, his chest heaving. Students began screaming again and started running toward the Staff Table.

McGonagall and Snape threw spells at the werewolf, but he managed to dodge them. Flitwick and the other teachers were getting as many students as possible into the side room.

"Impedimenta!" shouted McGonagall, her wand raised. The spell hit the werewolf, but it was only meant to slow him down from attacking other students.

Harry and Draco ran and then crouched down behind the Staff Table with other students. Hermione was crouched down a couple feet away from there, staring at the werewolf in horror.

In the mists of it all, Harry had forgotten that he had his Invisibility Cloak in his pocket and took it out to cover himself and Draco. But as he looked around the edge of the table, Harry saw the werewolf was edging toward a small student with red hair.

Once Harry realized it was Ron, he got out from under the cloak and rushed to the center of the room where Ron was slowly backing away from it.

Harry pulled out his wand and yelled at the top of his lungs, *"Incarcerous!"* From the tip of his wand, came long, thick ropes that found the werewolf and twisted themselves around the his middle and legs.

The werewolf fell to the floor and cried out in rage, saliva drooling out of its mouth.

"Thank you, Hermione," Harry whispered to himself. If he hadn't gotten that book of spells for Christmas, he never would have known that spell. Ron ran over to Harry, hyperventilating.

A ton of students, began inching their way out of the Great Hall, even now, to get away, and they were right to. The ropes from Harry's wand couldn't contain him and he sprang up, even angrier than before. It turned around to see the students trying to get out of the Great Hall and followed them with a loud howl.

The students that had tried to get away starting running as they screamed. McGonagall, Snape, and Sprout, as well as other teachers, ran after the werewolf, which had turned to the left onto the grounds. Once the werewolf was gone, the students that were left in the Great Hall began to calm down slightly.

Harry ran back to Draco with Ron right behind him. Even though Draco was invisible, Harry knew he was still there, too scared to move. "You okay?" asked Harry, taking the cloak off of him. Draco was still very white, but it seems that he was better now that the werewolf was gone. Harry put the cloak in his pocket.

"Greyback. Fenrir Greyback. I...I can't believe he's here," said Draco.

Hermione rushed over. "Ron, are you alright?" Ron nodded.

Harry looked to the center of the room, where Quirrel had fallen to see that he wasn't there anymore. "Where's Quirrel?" asked Harry to no one in particular. "The stone! We have to get the stone!"

Harry rushed to the doors of the Great Hall, hearing Draco, Ron, and Hermione's footsteps behind his. He stopped, looking out into the Entrance Hall to make sure that the werewolf wasn't there.

Draco was the first to catch up to him. "Do *they* have to come with us?" He nodded his head to Ron and Hermione, who were still catching up to them.

Harry turned to look at Draco. "We might need their help, Draco. You'll have to deal with it." When Hermione and Ron were behind them he continued, "The coast is clear. Come on."

A/N: Congrats to those who guessed that it was Greyback! Thanks for reading! Sara

Preview of Chapter 30-- A Sea of Spells:

Down the trapdoor go Harry, Draco, Ron, and Hermione, but it is far from easy. As Ron and Draco try not to curse each other, Harry and Hermione work out the problems that lay before them...

"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity."

-Albert Einstein

30

A Sea of Spells

Taking the stairs two at a time, they rushed to the forbidden corridor on the third floor. Soon they were in front of the large door that, they knew, held Fluffy. Ron asked, "How are we going to get past Fluffy?"

"We're gonna use you as bait, Weasley," said Draco with a laugh. Harry saw Ron glare at Draco.

"Be quiet!" called Hermione from the door. She had her head pressed against it and was listening, her wand in her hand. "I don't think we need anything."

"Wh—?" asked Harry, but he was cut short.

"*Alohomora!*" said Hermione as she pointed her wand at the lock, which clicked. With the help of Harry, she pulled the door open, and saw that Fluffy was asleep on the ground. Light music from a harp was being played in the corner, needing no one to play it.

"Quirrel's already been here," said Harry. "He could already have the stone. We have to hurry."

Slowly, not wanting to wake the large three-headed dog, they moved to the trapdoor. Ron tried picking it up but there was a lock, preventing them from opening it. Hermione tried *Alohomora*, but that did nothing. She tried other spells, but those were no help either.

After a while, Harry got so annoyed since they couldn't open the lock, he just kicked it out of anger. The lock came off and hit the opposite wall.

"Bloody typical," said Harry, pulling up the trapdoor. Below, all he could see was blackness.

"We're gonna go in there?" asked Draco.

Ron smirked. "Scared, Malfoy?"

"No!" said Draco, as if he had been accused of something horrible.

"Stop! I'll go first and then you three can follow," said Harry as he turned to them.

Harry took a deep breath and jumped into the darkness. He landed hard on the wooden floor below, but managed to keep his balance. The others were not so lucky.

The darkness surrounded them completely, not allowing them to see a single thing. "Oh, Blimey! What do we do now?" said a voice Harry recognized as Ron's.

"Calm down. I'll think of something," said Hermione somewhere to his right.

"*Lumos!*" said Harry. It was as if his wand were behind a very thick fog, not allowing a lot of light. "That's odd."

After Hermione, Draco, and Ron had lit their wands, there was enough light to see each other and a large, wooden door. Harry saw Draco looking at Ron and Hermione with disgust, but ignored it.

He knew he had to get to Quirrel. Harry got to the door and saw that there was a small square window just above his eye level. He got onto his tippy-toes and managed to look through.

There was another room with three long, wooden tables next to each other. Nothing was upon them. "What do you see?" asked Draco.

"Look," said Harry as he took a step back to stand next to Hermione. Draco and Ron pushed each other to see through the window.

"Hmm..." said Hermione. Harry looked at her inquiringly. ("Get out of the way, Weasley!" Draco said.) "I was just wondering why no light is showing through, if there's a window."

“Good point,” said Harry, moving toward the door. Harry turned the knob, thankful that it would.

Once they were all through the door, they extinguished the light from their wands, not needing it anymore. There were torches around the room and the three long tables were still there, but they were now covered in all sorts of vials. Some tall, some short, some thin, some square, and all in different colors. The room had no doors or windows.

Suddenly, they heard a loud “crack.” They all turned to see that the door was gone and it was just a blank stonewall. “Great. How are we going to get back?” asked Ron.

“Right now, we just have to go forward,” said Harry, moving toward the tables. He picked up a tall, purple vial.

“If I’m correct, I’d guess that we have to make a potion,” said Hermione. “Aha!” She moved to the middle table and picked up a piece of parchment.

“Well, that’s not too complicated,” she continued. Hermione looked at him and Ron, ignoring Draco, who was now holding up a small orange vial, which had some goopy green liquid inside. “We have to make an Exploding Potion. Probably to blast through one of the walls, but I’m not sure which.”

“Well, lets get to work,” said Harry. Hermione nodded.

“Hermione, how is it you know how to make an Exploding Potion? We never learned this,” said Ron.

“I read, Ron,” Hermione said. “Bring me that large jar over there. No, the one with the horn inside.” She pointed to a large, blue jar on the left table. Harry saw Ron bring it to her. “Harry, maybe you can find which wall we have to get through while I work on this.”

He went to the wall opposite from where they came in searching for some indication of which wall they had to explode. Harry heard footsteps coming toward him. “How long is this going to take?” asked Draco.

"I don't know, but I don't see you helping," said Harry, getting agitated.

"What am I supposed to do? I don't know how to make an Exploding Potion," said Draco, getting irritated by Harry's accusations.

Harry sighed and then said calmly, "Check that wall. Search for any burn marks. Quirrel had to have come through here already." Draco nodded and moved away to the right wall.

When Harry was absolutely sure that there was nothing on that wall, he moved over to the left wall. He didn't have to check the wall they came through, they didn't want to go back. He was also sure there was nothing on this wall. It was just a plain stonewall. No out-of-the-ordinary marks upon it.

"Harry," called Draco. "I found something." Sure enough, when Harry got there, he saw that there was a round scorch mark on one of the stones. "Brilliant, aren't I?"

"Oh, yeah. *Real* brilliant," said Ron before sniggering at Draco.

"No one asked you, Weasel," said Draco, glaring at him.

"Stop bothering each other! We don't need anymore problems than we already have!" exclaimed Harry. He walked over to Hermione to see how the potion was going.

"I found the Erumpent horn in one of the larger vials. Now I just have to cut it open to get the fluid inside." Hermione reached into her pocket and took out a small book, similar to the one she had given Harry.

"Do you just happen to carry books around all the time, Hermione?" asked Ron. She just gave him a look; Draco laughed at this and, in turn, Harry gave him a look. She opened it on the table and searched through the pages. Draco sighed after awhile and rested his arm on the table, but accidentally knocked over a small, red vial. It shattered on the floor, spilling its clear contents. They all looked at him.

"Well, I hope we don't *need* that," said Ron, staring angrily at Draco.

“We don’t. Just the fluid within the horn,” said Hermione. She closed the book and pointed her wand at a horn. Harry hadn’t looked at it before. It was somewhat brown, roughly textured, and curved. “*Diffindo!*”

There was another loud “crack” and the horn slit in half. Before it could get onto the table, Hermione grabbed the two parts and held them together. Harry motioned her over to the right wall, where she threw the thick, yellow liquid within the horn onto the old burn mark. They all stepped away.

“Isn’t something supposed to happen?” asked Draco, his arms folded after a minute of silence. “Ugh. What is that? Weasley, you smell.” Draco stepped away from Ron, covering his nose.

“That’s only because you’re near me!” said Ron, his ears turning red.

“It’s the wall!” said Hermione as she looked at Ron and Draco with annoyance. She turned and Harry heard her mutter, “Boys,” as she shook her head.

The yellow liquid on the wall was now bubbling and sputtering. “I suggest moving,” said Hermione.

They all started backing further away as they watched the wall continue to fizz out of control. Draco turned to her, “Well, we weren’t going to just stand there, Granger.”

“Maybe *you* should,” said Ron, giving Draco a dirty look.

Harry saw Draco’s hand move to his pocket. “Draco, no!” shouted Harry. He stood between the two of them, facing Draco. Harry looked him directly in the eye. “You do not lay a hand on them. Got it?”

“Only if you tell him not to touch me either,” said Draco, looking around Harry to sneered at Ron.

Harry turned around, still between them, to face Ron. “And you, too. Understood—?”

The wall exploded, creating tons of dust and debris. Harry coughed, as did the others, while trying to cover his face. “Lu—” He coughed. “*Lumos!*” He held his wand in front of him, and walked over the pieces of wall on the ground. Draco, Ron, and Hermione followed after him.

Pieces of dust got into Harry’s eyes, so he closed his eyes as he continued to walk forward. Unexpectedly, he felt two hands grab the back of his robes and pull him back. “Wha—?”

After rubbing his eyes clean of the dust, he opened them to see that both Draco and Ron had pulled him back, but they were still holding onto him. “What was that for?” asked Harry, looking to Ron, Hermione, and Draco. But he saw that the three of them were looking forward, silently.

Harry turned, opening his mouth in awe. There before them was a small cliff and below... a sea of water, which seemed endless. Ron exhaled loudly, letting go of Harry’s robes. Draco let go, as well.

“I can’t believe this! Quirrel must have taken a boat or something because I can’t see any way he could’ve gotten across this,” said Harry exasperatedly. He took a couple steps back, waving his hands in the air to get rid of the dust that still lingered.

As Harry sighed, Draco got a torch from the wall and went close to the edge. Harry walked back and stood next to Draco, looking over. Draco whistled at the sight.

Harry continued to stare at the moving waves. The water seemed to go on forever, but how could that possibly be? He knew they were still in Hogwarts. Could it be that, somehow, they were looking at the Black Lake? But then something caught his eye.

He motioned to Draco for the torch. Once he had the torch, he held it over the edge. For some reason Harry could have sworn he saw a reflection, but not the usual reflection of water, which was just the colors of what was being reflected. He could have sworn he saw a full reflection of him, Ron, and Draco.

After turning to see Hermione standing a ways behind them, he asked if she could bring over a couple pieces of debris. She came back with a couple pieces and Ron came over to see what he was going to do.

Still holding the torch, Harry lightly threw one of the pieces over the edge. They all thought it would fall down, eventually splashing into the water, but it stopped a couple inches in front of them.

"It's a spell! I should've known," said Hermione. Draco took the torch from Harry. Harry put a foot over the cliff, but it landed on, what seemed, like solid ground. And he would have thought it to be if he hadn't seen the water below, which was still moving.

They all continued on, not so hesitant anymore. As they walked further from the old room, a new one appeared a ways in front of them. But they were still over the water. Ron was walking on ahead, Hermione behind him, and then Harry and Draco. Harry looked behind him to see how far they had gone and then looked forward again.

The calm suddenly vanished. He heard Ron scream, but couldn't see him anymore. From behind, he saw that Hermione was on her knees looking down at something. Harry ran over, Draco right behind him.

Ron was in the water far below...

A/N: And the excitement just gets better, doesn't it? You'll find out more soon! Don't worry! Review!

Preview of Chapter 31--Revealing of Voices:

Harry finally gets to the room where Quirrel is looking into the Mirror of Erised. He talks to Quirrel and to Voldemort, but then someone unexpected shows up...

“There is nothing to fear except the persistent refusal to find out the truth, the persistent refusal to analyze the causes of happenings.”

-Dorothy Thompson

A/N: Sorry, guys, but I messed up on the summary for this chapter. Someone unexpected doesn't show up in this one, but the next one. Happy reading...

31

Revealing of Voices

Ron was in the water far below. Harry, dropping the other pieces of debris, pulled out his wand and Hermione stood up, doing so, too. “Oh my god, Ron!” cried Hermione, getting upset.

Harry didn't know a spell that could pull Ron out of the watery depths. The only spell he could think of was... “*Accio Ron!*” yelled Harry, pointing his wand down at Ron.

He saw that Ron was rising, but knew his wand wouldn't be enough. “Draco, Hermione! Help!” He heard Hermione yell the spell, too. Ron rose higher and was now hovering a couple feet above the water.

Behind him, Harry heard something drop and then footsteps. Draco yelled the spell and with the combination of three wands, they were able to bring Ron back up. A frightened, drenched Ron, but Ron nonetheless.

Ron stood there, shivering, water dripping from the bottom of his robes. His bright red hair, now darker from the water, was matted down to his head. Hermione sat with him, trying to calm him down. Harry brought over the torch that Draco had dropped to warm Ron.

Now, Harry needed to find a way to get over the gap; a gap he couldn't even see. And he didn't know where the edge was, since he couldn't see that either.

Harry took a couple steps, being careful with his footing. Opposite them was a gray wall and another open door. The door was only a couple feet away, but still too far to jump to.

Hermione kept repeating, "*Incendio!*" Harry knew it was the spell for fire, but why was she saying it over and over.

"Hermione, what are you doing?" he asked.

She looked up at him, concerned. "There's some sort of spell on the water that Ron fell into. It won't dry even when I have fire right before him," said Hermione, concerned.

"Then you might as well just stop. I don't see how repeating the spell is going to help," said Harry, downheartedly. Hermione nodded slowly, putting her wand in her pocket.

Harry turned away, looking at the door. It was so close, but oddly enough so far.

"What now?" asked Draco, who was now beside him.

Harry sighed loudly, before saying, "I...I don't know. Do you have any ideas?" Draco shook his head.

"H-Harry, I saw f-from the water a b-bridge to the other side," said Ron, as he shivered.

"A bridge? Ron, there's nothing there. Unless, its another spell," said Hermione. "Do you remember where the bridge is?" Ron said that he didn't.

Hermione stood up and grabbed the pieces of debris that Harry had dropped earlier. They all watched as she went as far left as possible before getting to the wall, where she lightly threw one of the rocks.

It fell with a splash into the water below. She did the same thing two more times, each time moving more to the right. The pieces fell to the water. When she was just right of the door that they wanted to get to, Hermione threw another piece.

The piece of debris looked as if it was floating in midair. "That's where the bridge is, I'm sure of it," Hermione said. She stomped her foot near the rock. The sound of wood was brought to their ears, and to them it was a wonderful sound. It meant they could get into the other room.

After a minute they got across and were safely in the next room. The room was lit but there were no torches or candles. Once again, there was another door on the opposite end of the room. Harry rushed over to it. He opened the door just enough to see Quirrel standing there with his back to him. His scar stung for a moment. The door pulled against his grip and slammed shut.

Feeling something was wrong, Harry backed away from the door. And just in time, too. Boulders fell from the ceiling, seeming to come out of thin air, blocking the door. Soon large and small rocks were falling, but all over the room. The sound of the rocks falling was so tremendous, that they could barely hear it when they all started screaming. They ran outside the room.

When they were just outside the doorway, Harry realized that Draco wasn't with them. He looked back in and saw that Draco's right leg was under a large boulder. He was trying to push it off, but it was too heavy, and more were still falling.

"I'll be back!" Harry screamed over the sound of the falling boulders. He ran in, trying not to get hurt himself, until he reached Draco. Harry also tried pushing the large rock off, but it was just too heavy. He took out his wand.

What was that spell that Hermione used? Come on! Think! As Harry was standing there he got hit on the head with a fist sized rock. He got a bit dizzy, but knew he had to help Draco.

"*Diffindo!*" yelled Harry, but nothing happened. He pointed his wand at the boulder again, after dodging another large rock.

"*DIFFINDO!*"

He didn't hear the crack of the rock breaking, but saw it as it broke into two pieces. Draco pointed to his leg and Harry understood that it

was broken. He put his forearms under Draco underarms, walking backwards away from the room.

Once Harry and Draco were out of the room, the rocks stopped falling. He saw that Draco was holding back tears of pain. Hermione had a large cut on her arm, which was bleeding. Realizing that he too was in pain, Harry touched the top of his head and felt blood. Not caring, he wiped it on his cloak.

"Harry, you have to go on to the next room. You have to stop Quirrel," said Hermione.

Harry nodded, looking around at the scene before him. Draco and Ron were both lying on the floor; one soaking wet, one with his leg broken. "Can you watch over them, Hermione?"

"Yeah. I can make some fire with my wand to keep Ron warm," said Hermione. At the look on Harry's face she added, "Malfoy, too. But if Ron doesn't get help soon, he could get really sick. Hurry, but be careful. Go on, Harry!"

He took one final look at them before going back into the room. The rocks began to fall again. Harry managed to get to the door, but it was halfway covered in boulders. He tried to move them, getting irritated that he couldn't. He pulled out his wand and just flicked it while yelling, "Come on! Move!"

Surprisingly, the closest boulder to him shattered. Harry covered his face with his arms. Sharp shards lodged themselves into the back of his forearms. He cried out in pain, quickly taking them out and throwing them onto the floor. He was bleeding even more now.

After five minutes of shattering rocks with pure anger, he managed to get into the room with Quirrel. The door slammed shut behind him. Harry saw that Quirrel was further in the room. Stage-like stairs were between them. Quirrel turned to face Harry.

Harry went down a couple stairs. "Professor, you don't have to give Snape the Sorcerer's Stone."

“Give—give Snape the Sorcerer’s Stone?” Quirrel laughed. “You’re so naïve, Potter. Why would I want to give Snape the stone when I can have it?”

Something about Quirrel was different but Harry couldn’t place it, and then he realized that Quirrel wasn’t stuttering anymore.

“You? *You’re* going to give the stone to Voldemort?” Harry asked incredulously. “But Snape. I thought he was making you get it for *him*.”

“He does seem like the one to be doing this, doesn’t he? Snape, who always hides in the shadow. But no! He was trying to stop me! He kept going to Dumbledore saying that he didn’t trust me and that I was up to something,” said Quirrel.

“Snape was right. It was you that tried to throw me off my bro—!” said Harry.

He was cut short by Quirrel, who took a couple steps toward him. “Of course it was I! Snape was trying to protect you, but you were too thick to think that *he* would.

“Once he found out about the letter I had sent, he got suspicious and knew I was planning something,” said Quirrel. He suddenly looked at Harry with anger in his eyes. “That bloody bird of yours almost got me caught when it came back scratched up!”

What he had said made Harry angry, as well. “Hedwig did nothing! You sent her to a werewolf!” yelled Harry, glaring at the man. Quirrel simply turned away, thinking.

“Yes, Greyback. The bastard almost got me caught by scratching your bird. And the letter...Snape found it! Got even more suspicious of me, and what I was doing. Always watching me,” said Quirrel, with a bitter tone in his voice. “Snape even threatened me. Made me look a fool!”

Harry decided to stay quiet while Quirrel ranted on. He had no idea where the stone was, so he knew he needed to wait.

Quirrel went on, "I daresay, Snape could have figured it out. But if Greyback hadn't come, I never would have gotten down here." He turned his back to Harry, whose scar began to sting. That made him think back to what Hermione had said about how someone could be making his scar hurt. *If it isn't Snape making my scar hurt then its got to be Quirrel. But how?*

Harry just realized that the Mirror of Erised was in the center of the room. Quirrel made a noise of frustration. "Now I just need the stone, but how do I get it?" The pain continued, but Harry tried to ignore it. Eventually, he couldn't and cried out in pain, dropping to his knees.

Quirrel turned and just smirked. "He never told me that would happen. Dare I say, I think it's an advantage?"

"What are you doing to me?" Harry asked, as he stood up.

"*I'm* not doing anything, but Lord Voldemort is," said Quirrel with a proud, but strange smile. Harry gave him a perplexed look.

"I want...to speak...to the boy..." said an airy, out-of-breath voice. Harry's eyes looked around the room, trying to figure out where the voice was coming from.

"Are you sure, my lord?" said Quirrel.

"Let...me see him," said the voice.

Quirrel began unraveling the purple turban on his head letting it fall to the floor. Harry began to grow anxious when more and more of Quirrel's purple turban was upon the floor.

Eventually, the turban was just a large, purple pile of fabric upon the floor. Harry's eyes moved to Quirrel, who was standing facing him, a smirk on his face. He was bald, which only made him more odd-looking. Quirrel took a couple steps toward Harry before turning around.

There on the back of Quirrel's pale head, was a face. A face that Harry knew was none other than Voldemort. His red eyes bore right

into Harry's green ones. Voldemort took a deep breath through his nose, which looked more to Harry like that of a snake.

As Voldemort continued to face him, Harry's scar began to burn. He ignored the pain that was slowly progressing.

"Hello, Harry Potter. Long time, no see," said Voldemort, a deliberate smirk appearing on his face.

A/N: What do you think? Please tell me, I would greatly appreciate it! Thanks for reading! By the way, there are only two more chapters left for Year 1!

Preview of Chapter 32--Promises:

Voldemort makes Harry a promise of power...

32 Promises

"Hello, Harry Potter. Long time, no see," said Voldemort, a deliberate smirk appearing on his face.

"I know all about your first year at Hogwarts. Quirrel has told me many things. Of how, on your first night here, you were placed in Slytherin. Not Gryffindor, like your parents," continued Voldemort.

"Don't speak of my parents! I know what you did to them! I know that you murdered them!" yelled Harry, his face getting hot in anger. But his anger only seemed to please Voldemort more.

"But you must have realized that you were placed into Slytherin for a reason," said Voldemort, pausing for a moment. Harry's anger subsided as he listened to Voldemort. "Power. Ambition. Only the most powerful and the most ambitious are placed into Slytherin. I know you are one of those people, Harry. I see that same gleam in your eyes that had lingered in mine, all those years ago...and a thirst, as well. A thirst to be powerful, to have people *kneel* before you. You want that, don't you, Harry? I can give you that. I can quench your thirst, Harry. Join me, and you will have unlimited power."

Harry didn't answer. He didn't know how. What do you say to that?

As Voldemort had been speaking, Harry had been listening curiously to his words, not paying attention to anything else. But now that Voldemort had stopped talking, he realized that his scar was really burning. Harry rubbed his scar and turned away from the figure below in hope of seizing the pain. It only subsided a little.

With his back turned, thoughts began to run through Harry's mind.

How did he know I wanted to power? How could he possibly know that? I have never told a single person that. Maybe he's right, maybe all Slytherin's want power. Maybe all those people are sorted into Slytherin. Voldemort said he had a thirst for people to kneel to him, like the older version of me from the Mirror of Erised. Is that who I could be? That person I saw? Could I actually make people kneel to me? No. No! I can't make people kneel to me! That's insane! I shouldn't be thinking like this! I shouldn't be thinking like Voldemort!

When Harry turned back, he saw that it was now Quirrel facing him. Quirrel was looking down at the ground. He had moved closer to the mirror. Voldemort was looking into it.

Harry heard a faint whisper, but couldn't make out what Voldemort had said. Soon, he said it again, louder this time. "Come here, Harry."

Reluctantly, walking slowly, Harry descended the stairs to Voldemort. The closer Harry got the more his scar burned. It felt like his scar was on fire, that his head was splitting in two as if someone had hit him in the head with a club.

The figure of Quirrel moved away from the Mirror of Erised to stand beside it, allowing Harry to stand before it. He gestured for Harry to look into the mirror. At first Harry just saw himself in the mirror, the room and the stairs behind him. His untidy hair and face were covered in dust from the previous room. There was blood on his forearms, but it was dry now and beginning to cake. His arms still hurt from the shards that had been in his arm.

But then the Harry in the mirror moved his left arm, when the real Harry hadn't. Harry continued to stare into the mirror. The other Harry had something in his left hand, which he held up. It was a bright red stone: the Sorcerer's Stone. He watched as the other Harry placed the stone into his left cloak pocket. Harry felt his pocket, but nothing was there.

"What do you see?" asked Voldemort.

Harry didn't turn to look at Voldemort, but continued to look into the tall mirror before him. *Should I trust Voldemort? Should I tell him that I see myself with the stone?* The Harry in the mirror smiled at him genuinely. *No. Voldemort shouldn't have a stone such as this.*

"What do you see!" asked Voldemort. His voice rose slightly, but it was powerful enough to make Harry jump.

"I...I see myself. K-kneeling before you. You're telling me I'm...powerful," Harry said on the spur of the moment.

There was a long pause, and then Voldemort whispered, "You're lying!"

Quirrel turned to face him, rage written on his face. "Tell the truth! What do you see!" shouted Quirrel. He lowered his voice to above a whisper, "I swear, Potter, you better tell me what you see!" He looked at Harry threateningly.

Instinctively, Harry backed away, knowing that if he didn't he probably would be cursed by Quirrel. He stopped when he was a couple feet away and was relieved when his scar didn't burn as badly. But Quirrel didn't care that he had moved and took to looking at the mirror once more.

Harry heard a door close behind him. Quickly, he turned, looking up the stairs to see a tall, cloaked figure with greasy black hair: Snape.

Snape was cut and bleeding in several places. There was a long cut on the side of his face. His cloak was torn all over, and covered in blood and dust.

At seeing Harry below, Snape said, "Potter, get away from Quirrel." Harry backed even more away from Quirrel. Snape rushed swiftly down the stairs, hardly making a sound, to stand in front of Harry protectively, wand in hand. This protective act shocked Harry (to say the least), but then he remembered what Quirrel had said. That Snape had saved him in the first Quidditch match. For the first time ever, Harry was happy Snape was there.

Harry peered around the form of Snape to see that Quirrel was facing him, not any closer than he had been before. "Ah, Severus. How nice of you to join us. I did think you would show up eventually, but...what too you *so long*?" Quirrel asked, a large smirk spread out on his face.

"I think you know, Quirrel. Greyback," said Snape. He paused, shaking his head at Quirrel. "How could you let Greyback onto Hogwarts grounds? Didn't you even think of the students that could have been harmed? Or no...you just thought of your precious stone. I knew you would do something, but this...?" He broke off, never finishing his sentence.

Harry knew that if he could see Snape's face, that there would be a disgust upon it.

"I knew all along that you suspected me. I knew that from the very first Quidditch match, that you suspected me. So you went to Dumbledore. Didn't feel the same, did he? How could he suspect...s-stuttering Professor Q-Quirrel?" Quirrel laughed, mostly to himself.

"I daresay, you could have at least tried harder to stop me, Snape. I would have been even more amused. You saw that letter and threatened me plenty, but didn't do enough to stop me from coming down here. Besides, you never would have succeeded. Not when I have the Dark Lord. He helped me when I needed someone..." Quirrel continued.

Harry had been listening to everything Quirrel and Snape had been saying to each other. As Quirrel talked on, Snape whispered to Harry. "Do you have the stone?"

Quickly, Harry moved his hand to check his pocket, thinking nothing would be there. He felt something solid inside. "Yes," Harry whispered back.

Peering around Snape again, Harry realized that Quirrel had stopped talking. He now heard Voldemort muttering something and Harry knew Voldemort had heard them.

"STUN HIM!" yelled the airy voice of Voldemort to Quirrel. Quirrel drew his wand.

Snape yelled, "*Sectumsempra!*" Harry watched as deep cuts appeared all over Quirrel's body, as if he had been cut with a sword. The slashes emerged on his face and body, immediately beginning to bleed.

Snape had been concentrating more on putting a spell on Quirrel than protecting himself, so he didn't realize that Quirrel had muttered the Stunning spell. Harry saw a bright red flash, and watched as Snape tensed up, knowing that the spell had hit him in the chest. Harry took a couple steps to the left, realizing that Snape was going

to fall backwards. He watched as his professor hit the floor with a loud thud, now unconscious.

Slowly, Harry moved to look at Quirrel, who had a lopsided smirk on his face. With Snape on the floor, Harry felt slightly alone and unprotected, but he knew he had the stone in his pocket, though he didn't know how to use it. Harry's hand moved to the pocket that contained the stone, just to reassure himself that it was still there, and it was. For a second, nothing was spoken, no one seemed to move in the room, and Harry was hardly breathing for fear of disrupting the solitude.

"Get...the stone!" Voldemort demanded to Quirrel. Harry's eyes widened as he realized that Quirrel was now running towards him. Quickly, Harry took out his wand. "Expel—!" Harry yelled, his wand out in front of him. But Quirrel was too quick, Harry's wand flew out of his hand and landed on the ground a few feet away.

Harry watched the direction it flew, not seeing the fact that Quirrel was now lunging at him. Quirrel grabbed him by the throat and pushed him against the stairs. Harry felt the edges of the stairs pressing into his back sharply.

Air was getting harder and harder to take in, as well as breathe out. Harry looked up at Quirrel, but he was looking at the hand that was forcibly against Harry's throat. Since his wand was feet away, which seemed far right now, Harry decided the only thing he could do was use the Sorcerer's Stone.

Pulling it out of his pocket, the only thing he could think of to do was to ram it against Quirrel's head, hopefully knocking him out. Harry did so, and Quirrel released his grip, stumbling away. Harry pulled himself up from the stairs.

When Quirrel took his hand away from his head, Harry saw that he was burned. Pleased by what the stone could do, he was now the one that lunged toward Quirrel.

Though Quirrel was much taller, Harry gripped his neck with his left hand and rammed the stone against Quirrel's head with his right.

Quirrel yelled out in pain, as did Voldemort, who Harry had forgotten about since Quirrel had been choking him.

Harry took a step back, but realized that Quirrel's neck was burned, where he had placed his hand. Quirrel was gently touching his neck, not paying attention to Harry, who was looking at his hands. Harry realized he didn't need the stone anymore, so he placed it in his pocket before diving at Quirrel again, placing his hands on the cuts that lined Quirrel's face. Both Voldemort and Quirrel screamed from what he had done.

For some reason, Harry couldn't help but smile. He took a good amount of steps away. Quirrel's loud shrieks of pain didn't stop, but continued on as he started to disintegrate right in front of him. Pieces of his skin burned off and fell, but crumbled into nothing before hitting the floor. Harry looked closer at his cuts, which weren't bleeding blood anymore, but ashes.

A piercing scream filled the room. Harry turned his head away, but couldn't escape the horrid noise. When he turned back, he saw no Quirrel, only a large pile of ashes. But floating above it, as an apparition, was Voldemort. Harry made out the same face that had been on the back of Quirrel's head. Luckily, Harry's scar didn't burn from being near the apparition.

"I promise you, Harry, that if you join me, you *will* have unbelievable power. I will return..." The ghost form of Voldemort quickly flew off. He was now alone in the room, the unconscious figure of Snape on the floor.

Reaching into his pocket, Harry took out the Sorcerer's Stone and looked at it. If Quirrel and Voldemort would go to any length to get this stone, then he knew others would do, too. It didn't seem like a good idea to keep it around. The Mirror of Erised was still in the middle of the room.

Harry went nearer to the mirror, but far enough so he wouldn't get hurt. With the stone in his right hand, Harry threw it at the mirror with all his strength. Though he covered his face with his arms, Harry saw the mirror shatter and the stone break into pieces.

Harry went to pick up his wand from the floor and then to kneel down to look at Snape. His face was even paler than usual and he was bleeding profusely in different places on his body. Harry knew he needed medical help, but he couldn't carry Snape and he didn't know a spell to get him out of the room. *Out of the room. Hermione! She would know a spell.*

Taking the steps two at a time, Harry ran up them to the other room. He opened the door and screamed for Hermione. He saw her appear in the other doorway. "I need your help!" She quickly ran to where he was, rocks began to fall from the ceiling as she ran, but she didn't get hit.

"Where's Quirrel?" Hermione asked as they walked down the stairs.

Harry pointed to the pile of ashes feet away from them. "I don't want to go into detail right now, but let's just say he was the one that wanted to give the stone to Voldemort. Not Snape." Harry added, "How's Draco and Ron?"

"Not so good. Ron's shivering got worse. Malfoy even stopped holding back his tears," she said.

They came to the body of Snape on the floor. "He was Stunned. Do you know a spell to get him out of the room? I doubt we can carry him along with Draco and Ron."

Hermione took the book out from her pocket and quickly flipped through the pages, clearly trying to find a certain page. It only took a couple seconds. "Got it. Maybe we could use it on Ron and Malfoy, as well." Harry nodded and moved to Snape, pointing his wand at the unconscious body.

Harry liked pointing his wand at Snape, and he very much wanted to put a different spell on him rather than the one Hermione was about to tell him to perform. He knew that Snape had saved him during the Quidditch match and also tonight, he had protected him from Quirrel, but Snape was always taunting him and Harry knew Snape hated him.

“Mobilicorpus. That’s the spell,” said Hermione. He knew she was watching him. With a flick of his wand he said the spell, slightly raising his voice. Nothing happened.

After a minute or two, they were both trying to get the spell to work. “We just need to concentrate,” said Hermione. Harry took a deep breath and stared at Snape’s body. He shouted the spell while keeping his eyes locked. Snape’s body slowly lifted off the ground. Harry was close to dropping him, but he concentrated and Snape’s body lifted more to float at waist level.

They eventually made it to the invisible bridge. As Harry and Hermione checked Draco and Ron, a voice called to them. Dumbledore was walking gracefully toward them on the invisible ground.

A/N: What do you think? Do you think that Quirrel, Voldemort, Snape, and Harry were portrayed well? And no, this does not mean that Snape and Harry are going to be any nicer toward each other. If anything, they will be more hostile towards each other. Please tell me! Thanks for reading! Only one chapter to go!

Preview of Chapter 33: The next day in the Hospital Wing and Harry has many questions; ones for Draco and for Dumbledore. And too soon does Harry have to part with the school...

“Goodbye for now. So long, I think the hardest part of holding on is letting go.”

-P.O.D., “Goodbye For Now”

33

Inquisitive

Madam Pomfrey wrapped Harry’s arms tourniquets, even though they had stopped bleeding hours ago. She said there was some sort of medicine in the fabric to further heal the wounds.

After Madam Pomfrey went to tend to Ron, Harry decided to talk to Draco. There was something he wanted to ask him about, which had happened last night that he didn’t fully understand.

Harry pulled back the curtains to where Draco was. He was awake reading a letter, which was most likely from his father. When Harry walked in, Draco put his index finger up to signal that he wasn’t done reading. He soon folded the parchment and just held it in his right hand.

“How’s your leg?” asked Harry, as he stood near the bed.

“Much better, now that I don’t feel any pain,” said Draco with a smile, but he continued more seriously, “Thanks for pulling me out of there.”

“What, you thought I was going to leave you there? If I had left, you would’ve died with all those rocks falling,” said Harry, somewhat casually yet somewhat seriously.

“Yeah, well. I thought a thanks was in order. You...err...you saved my life,” said Draco, looking down. Harry knew Draco hadn’t really wanted to say Harry had saved him.

“Oh, I would hardly call it *saving your life*,” said Harry.

Draco just shrugged. “Anyway, what happened after you went into the room with Quirrel? Snape wouldn’t tell me anything.”

Harry told him what happened. How it had been Quirrel that wanted the stone, not Snape. "Told you," said Draco with pride. "I knew he wasn't the type to want to live forever." Harry continued finishing the story about how Voldemort left, as if he were air.

Though, Harry left out the part about how Voldemort had told him they could have power together.

There was a moment of silence and then Harry said, "Well...I wanted to ask you something."

"What?"

"Why did you help me when Weasley was in trouble? I know you hate him," Harry stated plainly, looking at Draco.

Draco sighed at hearing the question. "Harry, I know he's your friend. You don't have to pretend by calling him by his surname," said Draco bitterly. "Besides, you would have jinxed me if I didn't help him."

Harry nodded and half-chuckled. "Probably."

They talked for a while about nothing in particular until Madam Pomfrey found Harry there and told him to go back to his bed. She said she would come to checkup on him in a few minutes.

Harry got up from the edge of the bed and pulled open the curtain just enough to get through. As he exited, a man was walking by, and Harry bumped into him. The man in a black robe winced in pain, gripping his arm tightly.

"Sorry!" Harry exclaimed to the man, who turned. It was Snape. "Oh."

Snape tightened his grip on his arm and walked away, without even giving Harry a reproachful look. Harry stood there, watching as Snape swiftly walked away, until he finally decided he wanted to lie down in his bed.

As Harry stared at the ceiling, he heard the curtain ruffle slightly, and he lifted his head to see Dumbledore standing at the edge of his bed.

He sat up completely and Dumbledore sat at the edge of his bed. "Hello, Harry," he said peacefully.

Harry gave him a small smile before saying, "Professor, I was meaning to ask you what happened earlier with Greyback. I know now that it was Quirrel, who told him to come. Was anyone hurt?"

"Greyback is no longer a threat. He was arrested and taken to prison. There were a few injuries, but no one is going to become a werewolf. The school is lucky to have careful teachers, teachers that can take care of such a situation. I'm just sorry I was absent," said Dumbledore.

"There was no way you could have known, Professor," said Harry.

"That's true," said Dumbledore. "Professor Snape told me what happened while down the trap door, Harry. That Voldemort was living off of Professor Quirrel. But he told me that there was a time when he was unconscious. I need you to tell me what happened."

Harry told Dumbledore what happened, leaving off saying, "Voldemort left, saying he would be back."

"I have no doubt that he will be back. When, I do not know. But he will be back, Harry."

"Professor, how is it I was able to burn Quirrel?" Harry asked curiously.

"You weren't able to burn Quirrel, you were able to burn Voldemort. Voldemort has never been able to touch you after the night you got your scar because of what your mother did. She sacrificed herself for you, Harry. Because of that you're still alive."

There was silence until Harry thought of another question. "Earlier I bumped into Snape—"

"Professor Snape," corrected Dumbledore.

"I bumped into Professor Snape, but he didn't turn to me or say anything. He just walked away."

"Your wondering why there was no remark from him?" said Dumbledore. "I'm guessing that he didn't like being hit with a spell in front of a student and knocked unconscious. And the fact that you were able to bring him out of the room to safety while he was unconscious, which I told him about, didn't help. He's bothered that it wasn't him saving you."

"I see," said Harry as he thought about what had happened just hours before.

Dumbledore moved to make himself more comfortable on the edge of Harry's bed. Harry looked up at Dumbledore, who was looking at him calmly.

"There's something I want to talk to you about, Harry," said his headmaster. "The Mirror of Erised. I know that before last night you hadn't seen it in months, but I want to talk to you about what you say in it all those months ago. You told me you saw your parents and that it would suddenly switch to an older version of you. A more powerful version of you."

Dumbledore was peering at him, almost unblinkingly from behind his spectacles. "I never really had a chance to speak to you about why it is you saw such a thing. Do you know why you saw the two blurry images in the mirror, Harry?"

"Not really, sir," said Harry truthfully. "I know that the mirror shows my desires, but I don't know why there was two."

"There was two because it seems you have conflicting desires about what it is you truly want," said Dumbledore. "On one hand, you have the desire to see your parents again. But on the other, you have the desire for...power."

At the word 'power,' Harry looked away from Dumbledore. Instead he stared at the blanket that was covering his legs.

"Those two desires are both great, I'm guessing, in your mind. Neither one being in higher esteem than the other. For now that may be true, but in time I'm sure that will change. I just hope you chose

the right path, Harry. Perhaps I should leave you with that," said Dumbledore as he got up from Harry's hospital bed.

He looked up at his professor, who didn't look angry or bothered by Harry's desire for power or the confliction in his mind. But Harry could have sworn he saw something in Dumbledore's face that showed a certain untrustworthiness of Harry, but it was quickly gone. Harry could feel an indivisible barrier that was slowly coming up between himself and Dumbledore.

Maybe Dumbledore won't trust him anymore because of what he knows about Harry. Dumbledore was a truly great man and headmaster, and Harry was saddened by the thought that something like this could hinder their friendship of teacher and pupil.

"Good day to you, Harry. Feel better," said his headmaster with a small smile. But before Dumbledore left, he turned back and asked, "What happened to the Sorcerer's Stone?"

"Well...I threw it against the Mirror of Erised. They both shattered. I don't think either of them should be around people," said Harry.

"Wise idea," said Dumbledore.

"Professor, what did you see in the Mirror of Erised?" Harry asked curiously.

"Myself putting on socks. I never get socks. It's always books," said Dumbledore with a warm smile, a twinkle in his eyes.

--

The school was as close to normal as it could get after having Fenrir Greyback in the castle and four students going down the forbidden trapdoor. It seems the whole school found out about them going in the forbidden corridor less than twenty-four hours after.

Two days later, when Draco had been released from the Hospital Wing, he could be found in the Great Hall, telling Parkinson about how they almost had to amputate his leg. Harry could hear her

gasping, and he started to laugh. Draco turned to him, "You don't mind if I leave out the part about you saving me, right?"

"If you tell a story, you should tell the whole thing. I'm the hero of this story," said Harry jokingly.

"We'll see," Draco said before he turned away.

The other Slytherin's had been almost outraged that Harry and Draco had associated with Gryffindors, especially a "mudblood" and a "blood traitor." A couple days after going down the trapdoor, a fifth year Slytherin boy had even jinxed him and Draco, thinking it funny that they had the word 'GRYFFERIN' written largely on their forehead in red to green letters. The boy and his friends laughed annoying afterwards and said they were Gryffindor-lovers. Draco got really angry, and attempted to Stun the boy, but missed. They went to Madam Pomfrey for half the day, so that no one would see them.

With the last month of school as the weeks of exams, Harry spent most of his time studying with Draco and Blaise. For hours on end, they could be found in the Common Room looking through a year's worth of notes. The last month was tedious, and the exam hours went slowly.

At the last dinner at Hogwarts, Dumbledore told the school that Slytherin had won the Quidditch Cup – the Slytherin table cheered loudly – but the House Cup had gone to Gryffindor – Slytherin glared at the Gryffindors, who were now yelling in happiness.

June 30th came around, and Harry was taking one long look at the Slytherin common room before he had to leave. Draco and the others had already left with their bags and were making their way down to the Hogwarts Express. But he didn't want to leave. Leaving Hogwarts would mean going to the Dursley's and he wasn't ready to do that just yet.

Just then, Harry remembered his Conglomerate Stone. Quickly, he fetched it out of his trunk and held it in his hand as he took out his wand. He looked at the different colors, but only green seemed the most suitable since it was the Slytherin common room.

He tapped his wand to the transparent stone as he said, "*Slytherin common room!*" The green stone became instantly opaque. He stowed the stone back in his trunk and put away his wand before he finally walked out of the common room.

Before long, Harry, Draco, Blaise, Crabbe, and Goyle were sitting in a Hogwarts Express compartment, waiting for the train to start. Harry was sitting near the window when Hagrid tapped on it and nodded for him to go to the train door.

"I'll be right back," said Harry as he got up and walked out. He met Hagrid at the door, who was holding a large, red photo album. /p

"This is fer yeh, Harry," said Hagrid, handing him the large book. "Pictures of yer mum and dad...and some friends. Have a good summer, Harry. See yeh next year."

Steam began to billow from the front of the train and a large hooting sound filled the area. "See you, Hagrid. Thank you." Harry went back into the compartment, holding the photo album.

"What're you holding, Harry?" asked Blaise.

"Photo album," Harry replied as he sat down.

Another loud hooting sounded and they all felt the train begin to move into a steady pace. It would be hours before they reached Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. As the hours past, the blue sky outside turned into darkness as Harry and the others talked about plans for the summer break and played some games before they had to say goodbye.

Eventually, the Hogwarts Express came to a loud stop. Harry got his trunk, saying goodbye to his friends. As he walked into the station, Harry saw Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia, and Dudley waiting for him, looking resentful since they had to have Harry back for the summer.

Draco followed him out to the station since he was looking for his father. Draco waved to him. Harry said, "Goodbye...for now."

--

A/N: So sad that we must part. Anyway, did you love it? Hate it? Don't want to read the six next sequels? Or can't wait for the sequels to be up? Please tell me/p p By the way, **"A Different Road II: Influence of a Diary"** will up in a couple weeks. Sorry for the wait. I thought I would give people a chance to finish the first one before moving onto the second. If I'm one of your favorite authors then you'll get an email saying that I put up a new story. If not then check the Alternative Universe category later.

Thank you all so much for reading my story! Thank you to those who constantly reviewed and gave me feedback whether it was good or bad. I sincerely hope that you all read the sequel, which will be up soon. And then read the ones after that since there will be more. Thank you again! Yours truly, Sara